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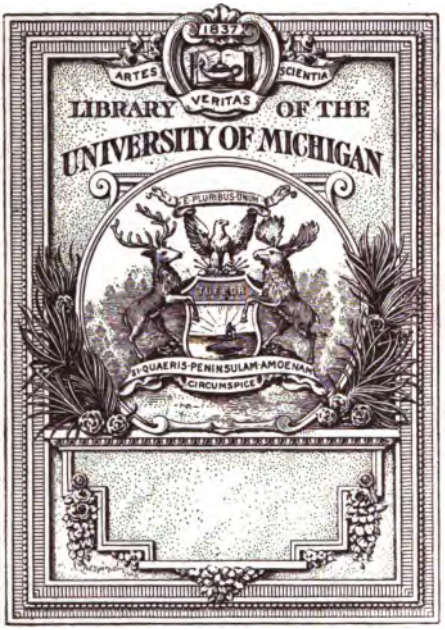
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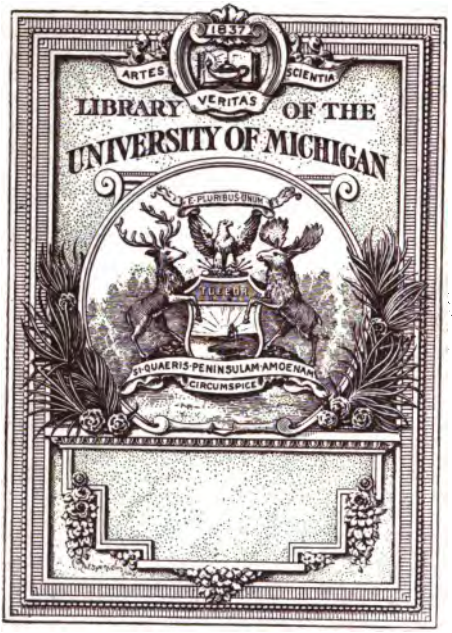
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GOD AND MAMMON

A TRILOGY

MAMMON AND HIS MESSAGE

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A TRILOGY

MAMMON AND HIS MESSAGE

BEING THE SECOND PART OF
GOD AND MAMMON

BY
JOHN DAVIDSON

LONDON
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1908

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NOTE

(I invite readers who possess "The Triumph of Mammon" to reperuse it before beginning the second part of my trilogy. This note is for those who have not read the first part.)

CHRISTIAN, the elder son of Christian, King of Thule, did in his twenty-first year, and upon his wedding-day during the sacrament of marriage, renounce Christianity, and therewith his birthright and his bride, Guendolen, a daughter of the King of the Isles. Unchristened immediately by his father (Thule is the one absolute monarchy in Europe in our day), and being exiled under the name of Mammon, he travelled for three years studying the world and the science thereof. In the meantime Guendolen agreed to marry Magnus, Mammon's brother, upon whom the succession devolved; but with her return to Christianstadt, the capital of Thule, for the marriage ceremony, Mammon also arrived, his mind made up, his heart hardened, and his extraordinary personal power urging him on, now at the beginning of

his twenty-fifth year, to attempt great things. Arrested at once by his brother, Magnus, with the approval of Aurelian, the ambassador of the Isles, and upon the advice of Guendolen, a most Christian princess, deeply, although unconsciously, in love with him, Mammon was clad in sackcloth, fastened to a large crucifix, and left alone in the chancel of the chapel royal.—An omen with some effect on Mammon's imagination was the salutation of a mad prophet who assured him upon his arrival that it is by torture men grow great.—Christian had forbidden Mammon to return to Thule, "save as a convertite, baresark and haltered"; and therefore when Mammon was brought before him from the chapel in the guise of a penitent, the King rejoiced, believing that the lost one had been found again. But the Christian device of Guendolen and Magnus for Mammon's compulsory conversion had failed; and the devout old king, maddened by his son's arrogant impenitence, accepted the counsel of Gottlieb, the Abbot of Christianstadt, who proposed to revive a disused, but unrepealed, law permitting castration in place of the capital sentence. Late at night, King Christian went to the chapel royal to fulfil this law himself. He announced his purpose to Mammon, and assured

nim of his sense of the greatness of the deed. He said :—

> "This awful sacrifice shall light the cross
> As with a human torch ; the will of God—
> No disembodied phantom in the mind
> Of men evolving, but the God that made
> The world—shall wondrously appear in me,
> Enabled like the patriarch, like God
> Himself, who offered up their sons, to kill
> My seed in you, and show mankind once more
> The most audacious faith, transcendent soul,
> The triumph of the spirit."

To escape a doom so horrible Mammon professed penitence with such verisimilitude that the King was deceived, and severed his son's bonds instead of destroying his manhood. The moment he found himself at liberty Mammon killed his father. Then summoning his friend, Oswald, and other of his former intimates, he hurried with them to the bedroom of Magnus and Guendolen who had been hastily married. Arriving before the consummation of the marriage, Mammon flung his brother out of the room upon the swords of his companions, and took possession of Guendolen. Next morning the bodies of Christian and Magnus having been set out in St. Olaf's Hall, Gottlieb, the Abbot of Christianstadt, exposed the wounds to the people and denounced Mammon as the murderer. Mammon denied the charge, and had

the Abbot removed in custody. He declared, further, that his father had died by his own hand in a fit of madness, and that his brother's death had been accidental. Having lied thus, he crowned himself. In the hall were representatives of the principal factions which in our time divide opinion in Thule, viz:—Socialists, calling themselves Reformers; Neo-Pagans, who desire the restoration of Norse mythology as a living faith; and the Inceptors of the Teutonic Religion, who deem the time ripe for the evolution of a new god. These having interviewed Mammon were in closer relation with him than the rest of the people in the hall; and the leader of the Inceptors of the Teutonic Religion, whom Mammon had offended earlier in the morning, took it on himself to suggest that Mammon should touch the bodies in proof of his innocence. Reluctantly Mammon did so; and as he stumbled against the catafalque on which the bodies lay, the leader of the Inceptors insisted that the wounds bled anew. Others observed, or professed to observe, the suggested, or desired, miracle; and Anselm, the papal legate, convinced of Mammon's guilt, excommunicated him and left the hall followed by almost all those who were present, including the Reformers, the Inceptors and the Neo-Pagans.

NOTE

In the square, Oswald, created Duke of Christianstadt for his share in the deeds of the previous night, arrested the legate by Mammon's order; and quelling the riot that broke out upon his action, entered the hall with a body of soldiers and the returned crowd. Mammon in the meantime had covered the bodies of his father and brother with curtains torn from a door entering upon the platform; but the sight of the bodies with the wounds exposed had been fixed in his brain indelibly. On the entrance of Oswald with assurance of the final success of the *coup d'état*, Mammon delivered an oration, the great message which inspired him enabling him to transcend all dishonour, all crime, the utmost evil that he could do, and, as the trilogy will finally show, the utmost evil that could be done to him. The conclusion of Mammon's oration will prepare the reader for "Mammon and his Message":—

"Time is not; never was: a juggling trick,
A very simple one, of three tossed balls,
The sun, the moon, the earth, to cheat our sense
With day and night and seasons of the year.
This is eternity: here once in space
The Universe is conscious in you and me;
And if the earth and all that is therein
Were now to end, the task, the pain, the woe,
The travail of the long millennial tides
Since life began, would like a pleasant fancy

Fade in the thoughtless memory of matter;
Because in me the infinite Universe
Achieves at last entire self-consciousness,
And could be well content to sleep again
For ever, still evolving in its sleep
Systems and constellations and tracts of suns.
But I would have you all even as I am!
I want you to begin a world with me,
Not for posterity, but for ourselves.
Prophets have told that there has seized on us
An agony of labour and design
For those that shall come after such as no age
Endured before. I, Mammon, tell you, No!
We have come after! We *are* posterity!
And time it is we had another world
Than this in which mankind excreted soul,
Sexless and used and immaterial,
Upon the very threshold of the sun,
To wonder why the world should stink so! Men
Belov'd, women adored, my people, come,
Devise with me a world worth living in—
Not for our children and our children's children,
But for our own renown, our own delight!
All lofty minds, all pride, all arrogance,
All passion, all excess, all craft, all power,
All measureless imagination come!
I am your King; come, make the world with me!"

Between the date of this oration, and the opening of "Mammon and his Message," a week elapses, the time having been employed by Mammon in the mobilization of the army of Thule, and its cantonment in and about Christianstadt.

MAMMON AND HIS MESSAGE

PERSONS

MAMMON	*King of Thule.*
OSWALD	*Duke of Christianstadt.*
GOTTLIEB	*Abbot of Christianstadt.*
SIGTRIG HARPUR	*Chief of Police.*
FLORIMOND	*Chancellor.*
ANSELM	*Papal Legate.*
AURELIAN	*Ambassador of the Isles.*
WOLFHART, ISLAN, SIEGFRIED, DIETRICH	*Noblemen of Mammon's creation.*
OLE LARUM	*Mayor of Christianstadt; an Inceptor of the Teutonic Religion.*
TAMBERSKELVER	*Head Inceptor of the Teutonic Religion.*
JAN RYKKE, ULF STROMER	*Inceptors of the Teutonic Religion.*
CRAWFORD	*A Reformer from the Isles.*
VIBBE, JELKE	*Reformers.*
RIBOLT	*Leader of the Neo-pagans.*
PAASKE	*A Thief.*
MUNTER	*A Beggar.*

MAMMON AND HIS MESSAGE

Two Tourists .....
A Sentinel .....
A Soldier .....
Attendants .....
GUENDOLEN ..... *A Princess of the Isles.*
INGA VOLSUNG .....
PROUNICE ..... *Guendolen's Woman.*
SIGNY SNOWBIRD .....
CANDYTUFT ..... } *Harlots.*

Attendants, soldiers, prison-warders, harlots, thieves, beggars, paupers, Inceptors of the Teutonic Religion, Reformers, Neo-pagans, and the mob of Christianstadt.

The place is Christianstadt, the capital of Thule, and the time occupied about twelve hours, beginning in the forenoon.

MAMMON
AND HIS MESSAGE

ACT I

SCENE I:—*A corridor in the Royal Palace.* PROUNICE *and* AURELIAN *whispering together at a window.*

PROUNICE. What can I do? She loves this anti-christ.

AURELIAN. But is not married yet?

PROUNICE. Not married?—No.

AURELIAN. Not married! No!—Is it a thing in doubt?

PROUNICE. It is as certain she is not a wife,
As undeniably she should be one.

AURELIAN. She should be one! Will you speak plainly, Prounice?

PROUNICE. For these seven nights the king has slept with her.

AURELIAN. King Mammon—with the princess! I am recalled,
And on my scrupulous oath adjured to bring
The princess with me. Prounice, you are known
A woman of great counsel: help me here.

PROUNICE. I cannot; for she loves; her own delight
Intoxicates her.

AURELIAN. Let me speak with her.

PROUNICE. You never will persuade her.

AURELIAN. Let me try.

PROUNICE. O, you may try! She passes presently.

AURELIAN. I'll take her home; for she was ravished, Prounice:
Unwed, the princess never had consented.

PROUNICE. O, she was ravished! She is ravished now:
You never saw a being so wonderful
With happiness. She has conceived, she thinks.

AURELIAN. Conceived! and happy! Has God forgotten her?

PROUNICE. Has she forgotten God!

AURELIAN. What? and the Isles?

PROUNICE. Her past is past: the censorship of love
Obliterates memory.

AURELIAN. Is she crazed?

PROUNICE. O, no!
But suddenly the dark distrustful bud
Has thrown its petals wide and bared its breast.
The princess is as like the maid she was
As a spread passion-flower, that bursts at once
With purple hue and honey fragrance, seems
The covert urn that held such pageantry.
I talk and talk who never talked before,
So absolute is love, so strong its spell
On all who come within its radiant power.

GUENDOLEN *enters.*

AURELIAN. *Not* as ambassador, I come: as man
To woman. Hear me!
GUENDOLEN. Why so passionate,
Aurelian?—I listen since I meet you.—
Prounice!
AURELIAN. Not by her means; I bought a way.
GUENDOLEN. Say what you have to say, then.
AURELIAN. Circumstance
Dismantles state and all ostent of things,
The bare fact standing only. Shall I show
Your father suddenly the ugly truth,
And say, when he demands his daughter, "Sir,
The princess is an atheist's concubine;
She has forgotten——"
GUENDOLEN. Atheist and concubine!
AURELIAN. The judgment of religion and the world.—
Now that I see you, Princess, I am dumb.
I thought to overwhelm you, melt your heart
With memories of the Isles, your sea-girt home,
Your childhood, and your father's portrait drawn
In tears and heart's blood. Vanity of mine!—
An old man from the top of honour's stair
Flung headlong, hoping to remount in one
Compendious step. When I without you, Princess,
Before your father stand, the most disgraced
In presence of the saddest man on earth,
What can be said, what clement language tell——
GUENDOLEN. That I am Mammon's wife and Queen of Thule?
Not that sweet epithet of concubine
That came so unctuously: my heart and brain
Are in that swarthy sound dyed deep like fair

And wholesome flesh in wounded blood, all black
With bruises and with stripes; and in the name
You throw at him, the most contemptuous word
In Christian censure, atheist. But as I speak,
The menace and the stain, phantasmal both,
Undone and faded, cease their dull abuse:
I have come out of Christendom; no scorn
Can hurt me. To my dearest father say
I love him with a new ethereal love;
And when we meet I hope to take his hand,
And lead him with me through the Universe.

AURELIAN. Come out of Christendom! It maddens me:
Considerate, old, a courtier as I am,
This maddens me. Come out of Christendom?
Come out of day and night, come out of thought,
Come out of speech, come out of flesh and blood.
The western world is Christian; and Christendom
In God's good time will comprehend the earth.
Your very atheist is a Christian, since
Denial warrants that which is denied.
No Christian can come out of Christendom!

GUENDOLEN. Indeed it seems, and is, a miracle:
One step in utter darkness, utter fear,
And Christendom is not. It never was,
But as an aberration or a dream.
We can be neither Christian nor Antichristian,
Theist nor atheist, nor any name,
Mohammedan or Buddhist: we are earth
And air, carbon and phosphorus and sulphur,
The lightning, and the ether—like the stars.
We are the whole great universe itself

Become intelligent and capable.
The Universe in love!—that's what I am:
And you, poor Christian friend!—what did you say?—
An atheist's concubine. No need have I
To talk forgiveness: while you live and move
In Christendom you must impute all evil,
Being nothing till you come among the stars.
Then will you see all that was ever meant
By God and spirit, heaven, hell and other world
Drop off the Universe like a little scab
From a healed scratch upon a baby's cheek.
Good-bye, Aurelian. Add that I am happy,
When my great father asks you how I take
The tossing world.

AURELIAN. Good-bye. I shall report
Your happiness.

GUENDOLEN [*gives* AURELIAN *a ring*].
And keep this to remind you
That Guendolen loves her friends however true.

AURELIAN. The barb is honeyed. Though I spoke what seemed
The truth, I wonder now, and doubt and muse,
And think there must be more than theory lodged
Within the husk of your material world.

GUENDOLEN. Come out of Christendom! One little step!

AURELIAN. A leap to me who am no athlete now.—
Good-bye again, Princess, and Queen of Thule.

GUENDOLEN. Good-bye, Aurelian.—Prounice, I want you now.

[*They go out,* AURELIAN *one way, and* GUENDOLEN *and* PROUNICE *another.*

SCENE II:—*The drawing-room in the house of* OLE LARUM, *the Mayor of Christianstadt. A joint committee of* Inceptors of the Teutonic Religion, Reformers, *and* Neo-pagans. *Present:* OLE LARUM, TAMBERSKELVER, RIBOLT, CRAWFORD *and others.* OLE LARUM *presides; but the discussion is informal.*

TAMBERSKELVER. The past is past, and Christendom dissolved;
The pious degradation of mankind
For ever ended. Therefore we begin
The cerebral secretion of a God,
And, uncreated, consciously create
Divinity in likeness of ourselves.
For me, I join with none who contravene
Inception of a new Teutonic myth.

RIBOLT. Inception of impossibility!
A myth becomes. Who now can crack a skull
That's kernelled with a goddess adult and armed,
Or integrate a man by synthesis
From elements whereof he is composed?
A mare's nest in a church with wind-eggs stored
Might tempt a brooding mind to incubate;
But he who stoutly sat to hatch a myth
Would doze till doomsday on the addled clutch.
A myth evolves, spontaneously preferred
As species are; matures, decays and dies.
The Christian myth, of senile gangrene sick,
Outlives its fame; Teutonic verity,
Though dispossessed in Thule, never died.

MAMMON AND HIS MESSAGE

By fraud, by massacre, by torment, Heaven
Obscured our Asgard; Hell, our Nifelheim;
While Christ a-mumming came in Baldur's weeds.
But every day of that usurpature
Somewhere in Thule opposite the sun
A rainbow spanned the gulf, with lambent bridge
And seven-stringed arc of beauty diverse-hued,
The token of a covenant set up
Between the earth and Asgard, the shining way
To high Valhalla and the golden grove.
Vision and vigil in a night of dreams,
The turbulent centuries of Heaven and Hell,
Christ and his cross, are as they had not been.
Behind the phantom veil of Christendom
Unhappy ghosts of gods, the mournful Wanes
That were the deities of beaten men,
Frequented barren shores and stormy isles
In precincts and in purlieus of the sea
Beyond the reach of tidings; but at home,
In Thule, though we worshipped not, nor knew,
The thunder and the lightning kept their court;
Daily the Valkyrs galloped; Woden sat
Eternal and serene upon his throne
Watching the ages; Baldur slept in death
Heedless of him from Jewry who played his part;
The goddess of the mountains, Hulda, shone
With moonflowers wreathed; celestial Freya turned
Her golden spindle in the midnight sky;
And the earth-tree Igdrasil, watered well
By fateful ministrants, above the fount
Of Urd spread forth its branches evergreen
Where the high Regin sit and judge the world.

TAMBERSKELVER. I cannot listen longer! What
state, what court
Does lightning keep? The meanest slave of man,
Compelled to prattle on a million dials
From post to post, and underneath the sea
Confined in cables; to whisper fact and fiction
Through wired and wireless winds, and gravely wear
In every land newspaper for a livery.

RIBOLT. Loki, the old-betrayer of the gods——

TAMBERSKELVER. Antique distraction! And your
women-waves,
Your ladies of the lake, your river sprites;
Your water-music and your gurgling songs
That none could hear and unenchanted live?
Tortured in tubular boilers Neckan cries,
And Lorelei evaporates in steam.

RIBOLT. This servitude of gods in every age——

TAMBERSKELVER. You hear them in the tunnel and
the fog:
The engine's whistle and the siren's shriek—
The Neckan and the Lorelei in pain.

RIBOLT. It may be that the gods——

TAMBERSKELVER. Delight in hell!

RIBOLT. I mean that Loki——

TAMBERSKELVER. And I swear by heaven,
And all your heavens, the time foretold has come——

RIBOLT. Though I must roar you down I will be
heard!

TAMBERSKELVER. The bull out-bellowed Baldwin at
the fair!

RIBOLT. And thunder silences the lion! Listen:—
Think you persistent fate, as sedulous

As virgin love, that, steeped in poverty,
Works double tides to furnish bridal gear,
Forbearing our tradition, would abdicate
Eternal power in Thule only; leave
The Aesir and the brood of Bergelmir
To stagnate in a dream because mankind
Had ceased to think of them? No, by the Norns,
That visit me with whispers ominous!
What error, what unworthiness befell
The water-wraiths and ladies of the lake
That they, imprisoned in the toil of men,
Should undergo intolerable pangs
(A recent penalty, remember) still
Remains unguessed, unpenetrated, unrevealed;
But that the swift and dazzling god of flame,
Loki, the lightning, should be bound once more
For new divine iniquity requires
No revelation to interpret. Foe
Of gods and men, his former blasphemies,
For which he lay strung on a pinnacled cliff
As on a giant rack with spikes engrailed,
While venom splashed upon his working brow
From the old serpent's jaws and furrowed fangs:
I say, his former expiated guilt
Was innocence and sanctity beside
The self-abandonment and utter sin
Atoned for now in execrable bonds.

TAMBERSKELVER. What hideous sin was that?

LARUM. Why here's a man
As passionate for things that never were
As we concerning those that are to be!

TAMBERSKELVER. This sin of Loki's, new, original,

Unparagoned?

RIBOLT. Betrayal, more obscene
Than any legend tells of Ahriman,
Of Satan, or the sons of Ouranos;
For Loki's golden lightning enchanted men,
Possessing science with the thought of him
As all in all; substance and force and life
In multitudinous forms, and sifted out,
By micrometric thought that can divide
The invisible, in nests of polar orbs,
Electrons, building up the atomic stuff
Whereof the universe consists: the gods,
The dwarfs, the giants, the very Regin trace
Descent, forsooth, from Loki, and live in him!
For which unhallowed treason Woden sent
The felon god to penitential toil
In mundane transit, fabric and lantern-work;
But chiefly in the labour of the net
He was the first to weave: now the strong mesh
Is metal and the draught sweeps land and sea,
A mammoth spider-web beaded with towns;
While Loki in the wires a thousand ways
At every moment torn, obeys a touch,
A whisper, carrying news, the slave of slaves,
The lackey of the liars of the world.

CRAWFORD. I marvel—and I marvel! All the gods,
By time devoured, are with the draff of things.
Cull from the evening air the rose's scent
In stoppered crystals for the market-place;
From earthshine and the dusk condense a star
To rival day with shadows of itself;
Invent alembics, menstruums, furnaces

That shall distil the light of yesterday
And brim with dewy rainbows cups of gold;
But never think to re-establish God,
Revive decayed mythology, or gloze
With renderings of the hour an ancient creed.

TAMBERSKELVER. Attempt instead to scribble on the sky
A prophecy with last year's thunderbolt!
But that new racial myth which we incept,
Uncatholic and Teutonic, alone amid
Opinions, nostrums, ologies and isms
That work the world with internecine thought,
Keeps promise, pregnant with futurity.

RIBOLT. Pregnant with maggots and the sepulchre!——

LARUM. I stop this quarrel—and the meeting. Come
Again at night; and in the interim think
A tortuous passage out of personal aims
To the high sea of common cause against
Gigantic tyranny.—Let no one speak.

[*The meeting breaks up in silence.*]

SCENE III:—*A room in the Royal Palace.* FLORIMOND *is seated at a table with papers, etc.* OSWALD *stands moodily at the fire-place with his elbow on the mantel-piece.* MAMMON *is at the window.*

MAMMON. The parks and squares of Christianstadt thickset
With shining tents! From east to west one camp
Wherever nature, elbowing brick and stone,
Throughout the city lights her urban haunts
With lilac and the chestnut's lamp of pearl!

FLORIMOND. The powers have all withdrawn their embassies.

MAMMON. I know.—[*Leaves the window*]
I thought it, willed it, and I took
My army in my fist to batter down
The churches, scourge the Christians hence and carve
The world in my own image; but my grasp
Was empty; time and space withheld the huge
Briarean implement an army is,
Scattered abroad in barracks and in forts
To trick me out of prompt omnipotence.
That was an agony:—seven useless days
With Christendom to war upon, and one
Brief life wherein to work its overthrow.
If I could live a thousand thousand years,
Or crush a million into every day!

FLORIMOND. Aurelian, desperate, hangs about the court,
Unwilling to return without the princess.

MAMMON. What princess, sir?

FLORIMOND. Without the queen, I mean.

MAMMON. Say what you mean.—Aurelian shall return
Without my wife.

FLORIMOND. The well-born and the rich
With flights of humbler folk depart the land.

MAMMON. They would; but I restrain them. None can quit
The realm without my signature and seal:
The laxity that marred my father's reign
I've medicine for.

FLORIMOND. Why was this hidden, King?
Unless your faithful counsellors understand
The whole executive they cannot aid.

MAMMON. I have no counsellors: only obedient friends
Who love me and whom I cherish; and the rest—
My instruments, my music and musicians,
The clay, the wheel, the pots I break and make.

FLORIMOND. I must be faithful:—you are deluded, King;
Your people mock you.

MAMMON. Mock my speech? I know:
My great deliverance in St. Olaf's Hall
Is travestied by every café-wit,
While greasy waiters behind their napkins grin.
Therefore my army camps in Christianstadt
That deeds may thrive where oratory fails.
Yet will I speak:—speak?—speak again, and match
My universe with every type and grade.—
What day is this?

FLORIMOND. Of the week?—Friday, King Mammon.

MAMMON [*consulting a diary*]. Friday:—To-day a herd of harlots come,
With outcasts from the pauper refuges.
I have determined how to deal with these.
I'll see them now.—Is Sigtrig Harpur there?

FLORIMOND. Not yet, King Mammon.

MAMMON. Send for him, Florimond.
I want him and his harlots and his scroyles.
I long to face the offscourings of the world,
And to confront them with the Universe.

FLORIMOND *goes out.*

MAMMON. Among the showrooms of the palace, Oswald,
Is one I mean to close.

OSWALD. Which room, King Mammon?

MAMMON. Perdition's antepast and hell on earth,
The torture-chamber.

OSWALD. And the gentle world
Will thank you. Shows of horror should be shut;
They vex the feeble, vitiate the strong.

MAMMON. You think so.—All the thumbscrews, headscrews, grills,
The rack, strappado—these are as they were
Three years ago; demonstrable and ready?

OSWALD. The keeper triumphs in his occupation;
The turnstile goes all day.

MAMMON. The keeper's joy
Will soon transcend a dilettant delight,
And the locked turnstile on its bearings rust.
Have we a draught, or cowardice of men

For torture adequate and capable?
I mean,—to use the levers of the rack
With living bones and sinews, flesh and blood
To pull upon?

OSWALD. There are such men, no doubt.

MAMMON. Where are they to be found, such warty souls?

OSWALD. In prison and in Bedlam.

MAMMON. Criminals
And madmen?—Ah, you mean the warders! Yes;
They'd have the heart to turn a thumbscrew still:
I had forgotten. I want some six to-day—
Six prison-warders in the torture-room.

OSWALD. You mean to torture some one? O, King Mammon,
Consider and consider! Men may heap
Enormities upon their consciences
And lightly carry everything, as brides
Their customary wreaths of blossom wear!
But with the very pressure——

MAMMON. Of the bridegroom
There comes in time a string of chubby brats.
You misconceive again. I in myself
Will show mankind how dead are all the lies
The other-worldings forged and foisted in
Amidst the immaculate material truth
Like false decretals in the canon law.
Men may do what they list without a thought:
Matter of brain and blood, good food, good drink,
Employment of the muscles, of the nerves,
With high imaginings, superb designs,
Superb exploits, sound sleep and pleasant dreams.

OSWALD. But when the stagnant blood rots in the brain
Imprisoned fancy dies; when food and drink
Are routine only, not a joyful art,
Compunction sours the wine and in the dish
A rancid horror crawls; when sleep rebels,
And dreams turn traitor, like a homeless cat
Remorse keeps up a mewing in the night,
And all the silken fabric of the nerves
Becomes a cobweb, tangled in the coils
Whereof the conscience like a flesh-fly sings
A thin and aguish note of agony.

MAMMON. You speak of what you know! Have you no sleep?

OSWALD. No wink of sleep. There's blood upon my soul—
Not for its cleansing.

MAMMON. To shed blood is to cleanse:
The world is cleaner since my father died,
And sweeter by my brother's life outpoured,
Like fragrance from a vessel richly chased
That bursts asunder with its weight of balm.—
You sleep alone?

OSWALD. I lie alone: you know
I am not married.

MAMMON. Married! What of that?
You should have some sweet woman: wantonly
I do not mean, but needfully and highly:—
'Tis new to me and wonderful:—stop up
The body anywhere, at once the soul,
Which is the body, sickens and torments
With questionings and qualms and quodlibets

The grey rind of the brain—uneasiness
Supposed of old the Holy Spirit's work.
OSWALD. O king, you scorn my misery!
MAMMON. Not so;
I mean to help you. O, I undertake
The cure of all distress, however deep
The mortifying wound, however foul
The immaterial gangrene! Let me know:
Physicians must be told the hateful things
Men fear to tell themselves.
OSWALD. I underlie
A heaped, downbearing, brooding heaviness
No fantasy can shift, no thought explode.
Far as the farthest in our prodigal
And boyish hardihood of mind I sped,
Stripped to the marrow in the exodus
From Christendom and zeal to try a fall
Naked against the Universe. All that
Was holiday and playground! In the world's
Reverberating fire my adamant
Buckles like parchment, and my unarmed soul
Cries out for respite and the hearth I left;
To feel that right is right and wrong is wrong;
To choose the better part, and repossess
My own approval and the world's goodwill.
MAMMON. The world's goodwill no man should hanker for;
You have your own approval at command!
OSWALD. Not at command—not now at my command!
Since I consented in the prince's death,
Conspired to make the world believe a lie,

And broached the blood of Thule I am sunk
In sin up to the lips: upon its wash
I choke; its fume and spray nauseate and blind me:
Palsied, inhibited, accursed, forbid,
I shall go mad unless I can repent.

MAMMON. Sin, Oswald? Sin's a costive habit chiefly;
And doubtless prayer promotes catharsis: prayer,
And cascara sagrada; clysters, pills:
To purge is to repent. Love, too, is sin:
A vent plugged up and sealed with celibacy
To keep contrition at the boiling-point.
You cannot laugh? Matter of mirth mankind
Should make all sin henceforth—inviting still
The lofty mood that deems our daily deeds
Eternally momentous.

OSWALD. Can I live
Beneath the intolerable weight of care
That crushes me!

MAMMON. Cast it on me! I need
You, Oswald: conscience such as yours,
With ardent power; such scruple with such daring,
A rare alloy I have assayed, provide
The very mettle of a minister.
The strength and fineness of your nature claim
My interest, my affection, and my faith.

OSWALD. But every nerve is quick with sense of sin.

MAMMON. A sense of sin is rust: go on to sin,
And make the sense of it a constant joy:
The sin's the man; keep your soul bright with sin;
For oxidation of the blood and brain,
Unused in psychic function or physical,

Corrodes the mind and stains with iron-mould
The dazzling web of thought even in the loom.—
Have you a handsome lady that you love?

OSWALD. I am betrothed to——

MAMMON. Marry her to-day,
And in your true love's arms be purged of sin!
O marry, marry, marry! By three great vents
The conscious universe renews itself:—
By that most honourable alvine vent
(Considered shameful once, but now by me
Exalted) that discards triumphantly
Fermented refuse; by that exquisite
Secernent carrying off exhausted blood,
Muscle and wear and tear of body and brain—
The Ganges of the soul, the sacred stream
That floats our dead away, dead thought, dead power,
The substance of the stars; and that third vent
The first among its peers, the vent of love,
Not like the other issues, desolate
Escapes of death, but, being the fount of life,
A secret ecstasy that two may share,
Dissolving out the universe to be
The seed and substance of posterity:
A vent of love, a thoroughfare of life
Whose admirable presence in the midst
Could graciously ennoble all the rest
Were every function not itself a lord
In its demesne. So, marry, marry, marry!
Amassed maturity that clogs the mind
Is sin essential: set your life abroach;
Have all the fountains playing, the lanterns lit;
Give matter scope; let the whole tide of things

Throng through you; be the channel and the bridge,
The vein, the artery and the rhythmic heart
The rapid current of the ether loves—
A man with every fibre strained to do
And every faculty in exercise.

OSWALD. I have the king's command to marry?

MAMMON. Now!

Choose out the warders first: I mean to torture
Gottlieb—

OSWALD. O king and friend, you will not do it!

MAMMON. Will I not! And you shall share the adventure;
Thereafter in your bride's embrace become
A sinless virgin. Love's the greatest thing!
Have you not wondered sometimes how men live
Disgraced, dishonoured, shamed, uncharactered?
It is by love: in the world's sight they seem
Unhappiest recrement, but every night
Their faithful women take them in their arms,
And all the past and each day's infamy,
Being evicted in the vent of love,
The door stands open for the universe
To enter and renew them body and soul.
O men are great! The meanest man is great!
How great might men not be! How great I'll make them!
Marry the lady, Oswald, and at night,
After the barbarous festival of the rack,
Unlock the floodgate of the Universe
That thunders for deliverance form and power
In all the sex of plants and beasts and men.

OSWALD. O King, you overwhelm me!

MAMMON. Do my will:
And lay your sins on me if courage fails:
It is the right of kings to bear the brunt.—
My hand:—No; clasp it: we are friends:
Who does my will is mine, a piece of me.

ACT II

SCENE I:—*A hall in the Royal Palace. On the right is a dais with a door entering upon it. On the left are rows of carved stalls. There is a considerable space between the dais and the stalls. A large door at the back. When the act begins* SIGTRIG HARPUR *and* FLORIMOND *are keeping order among the harlots, who are seated in the stalls.* SIGNY SNOWBIRD *and* CANDYTUFT *are in the front row.*

MAMMON *enters on the right and summons* SIGTRIG HARPUR *who ascends the dais.*

MAMMON. Are these all licensed women of the town?

HARPUR. Licensed and warranted. They represent
A dozen brothels and every race in Europe.
I've brought a Malay also; and that's a Cuban:
Ten days ago a Matabele died:
With her I could have shown four continents.

MAMMON. These women have been known to many men?

HARPUR. To scores of men; to hundreds, some of them.

MAMMON. Then are they all insane?—in mind, I mean.

HARPUR. Incontinent in mind and body, King:
Their beaten blood, all froth; their nerves, in rags.

MAMMON. Ploughed up and harrowed and manured
with sin,
Their fallow souls are seasoned for my news.
These women will understand me: these, at least.
HARPUR. They are quick to understand.
MAMMON. Timid and bold,
They browbeat their own smiles with sulky looks
Lest they offend me. But these are handsome women!
Some of them have been beautiful; some still
Are comely. They were children once; and once——
My heart begins to choke me; I must speak,
And greatly: otherwise should no man speak,
And least of all to such an audience.—
Subjects and sisters, harlots of the town,
I sent for you to tell you what you are.
You are the corner-stone of Christendom;
And were I Christian with unction I should say,
"You of all classes are the children of God;
Bulwarks of chastity and sinks of lust,
You keep the Christian family possible;
From your corruption orange-blossoms spring,
And glowing blushes of the virgin bride.
Therefore go forth and sin courageously,
Enhance your charms, and triumph in your art:
Be proud and happy as God's good whores should be."
Some of the harlots *begin to sob.*
MAMMON. Why do they sob?
HARPUR. Your voice is gracious, King;
And these must either sob, or laugh, or rage;
No mezzo mood with them.
MAMMON. But that is great!
Has vice theurgic power so wonderful?

The thing enchants me now.—So would I say
Were I a Christian; and extol to heaven
The excelling mystery of iniquity
Whereby God lets his people sanction sin
In vessels of dishonour that the elect
May breed securely in domestic bliss.
But I am here to put an end to sin,
To ruin Christendom, to change the world,
To set the time. With you, then, I begin,
The blood-stained corner-stone. From this day forth
The license is withdrawn; the harlot's trade
Forbidden under penalty of death.
To every legal harlot in Christianstadt
To-day a score of sovereigns shall be given
Wherewith to quit the land or seek in Thule
Another livelihood.

The harlots *exclaim, laugh and whisper to each other.*

MAMMON. If you would speak
Address me boldly. Can any of you talk?

HARPUR. She that's the silentest among them knows
More turns of speech than twenty crack debaters.

SNOWBIRD. Can any of us talk!

MAMMON. What is your name?

SNOWBIRD. They call me Signy Snowbird. [To HARPUR] What do I say?
Your majesty, or sire, or royal highness?

HARPUR. King or King Mammon. These flourishes are dead.

MAMMON. Is that her name?

HARPUR. Her nomme de guerre, bestowed
Upon her swarthy mane and ruddy cheeks;
A simple irony common with her kind.

MAMMON. What countrywoman are you?
SNOWBIRD. Of Thule, King.
MAMMON. Say what you wish to say.
SNOWBIRD. With twenty pounds
I'll book a passage by the evening boat,
And be in Paris in the morning, King.
Thank you a thousand times, great King of Thule.
My word, you are a king!
MAMMON. Leave out the king.
How will you do in Paris?
SNOWBIRD. I'll tell you what:—
I dream of Paris and the things I've heard;
The cafés and the restaurants in trees;
The gaieties at night—and all night: mad
Montmartredoms, and in the rues—my God!—
The spice of absinthe all the afternoon.
O King, and won't you come?
HARPUR. Control your tongue.
A fine of twenty pounds would stop your jaunt.
SNOWBIRD. But Signor Sigtrig—
MAMMON. Let her tongue run on:
I understand that harlotry like God
Has no respect of persons.—You intend
To follow harlotry in Paris, harlot?
SNOWBIRD. I am a lady that delights in things
That please her, King.
MAMMON. I said to drop the king.
SNOWBIRD. Then drop the harlot.
MAMMON. I call you what you are—
SNOWBIRD. Are you not king, King Mammon?
MAMMON. From my mouth
You snatch the obvious. Since it is, so be it:

You, harlot; and I, king.—Answer my question:—
You mean to follow harlotry in Paris?

SNOWBIRD. I'm not a harlot, and I never was:
I don't know what you mean by harlotry.

MAMMON. You live by hiring out your sex to men?

SNOWBIRD. You filthy fellow!—Stupid, ignorant king!

Some of the harlots *scream and others hiss.*

MAMMON. What trick is this? Whom have you brought me here?

SNOWBIRD. *They* must be humoured, still saying what they please,
If one encounters them without the law.
They have a kind of fancy in their trade,
A sort of euphemism in speech and deed
(If I may say so), while their vigour lasts.

MAMMON. I should have known that: I forget myself.
This is the greatness of the Universe.—
Madame and sister, will it please you well
To change your honest calling?

SNOWBIRD. Brother and King,
I'll tell you what:—I'm sometimes sick of change.
I had a lover once; but that's vieux jeu.

MAMMON. A wilful misconception.

HARPUR. They think it wit.

MAMMON. A lover once? Have you, or any of you,
No inextinguishable fierce desire
For vengeance on the author of your fall?

SNOWBIRD. And who may he be, King?

MAMMON. He that seduced you.

SNOWBIRD. No one seduced me. O, la, la!—What's this?

You think we women are the kind of things
Men write about? Why, we ourselves seduced
Our own betrayers, every one of us:
Make you no doubt of that. Vengeance on men?
The whole thing's vengeance; love and life and all—
Somebody's bloody vengeance on the world.
[*Bursts into tears.*

All the harlots *with the exception of* CANDYTUFT *lift up their voices and weep.*

MAMMON. I cannot talk with these. What shame to think
The cross of Christ may be their only help!
My message is the greater: once more I try.—
Fair lady, who are you?

CANDYTUFT. I'm Candytuft.

MAMMON. You're Candytuft!—And why?

CANDYTUFT. That's asking.
Something to do with cats; I don't know what:
Cats like me or dislike me; I don't know how.

MAMMON. How can I reach them?—Candytuft, you like
Your pleasant calling.

CANDYTUFT. O, I like it, King!

MAMMON. What do you like about it?

CANDYTUFT. O, go on!

MAMMON. I am helpless here: my news cannot be told:
The Universe seems to be blotted out.
Beasts, plants would understand me:—and so shall these!
How will you use your twenty pounds? Remember,
Your calling's at an end.

CANDYTUFT. I think of that;
And wonder what to do.
MAMMON. Work; and in all
Events you and your friends are now set free
From man's brutality.
CANDYTUFT. O, are we, King!
I never met a brute. Don't you mistake:
You men are brutes at home; but not with us:
Good fellows, happy to be helped: a rough
And tumble wedding, often as not. My life!
What could men do without us? Yes, and the boys
That come ashamed and shy to taste their first
Forbidden fruit? Such a time while it lasts!
We help the world, we help it to be good.
You called us paving-stones—
MAMMON. The corner-stone
Of Christendom.
CANDYTUFT. I guess your meaning, King;
And guess you're right; we're indispensable,
Like food and drink. How can the world go on
If girls must die for giving men a treat?
MAMMON. How does the world go out?
CANDYTUFT. I guess your meaning, King:
We have no children. But I've heard it said
The world's too full; so there we help again.
A child when one's alone's the deuce and all
For lightsomeness . . . . We can't have everything.
I'm Candytuft, and take it as it comes.

The harlots *have dried their eyes, but some of them begin to sob again.*

MAMMON. I have them now; I'll grip them by the heart.—

A woman taken—Stop that crying and listen!
The harlots *are startled and listen attentively.*
A woman taken in adultery,
Far off in some barbaric eastern land,
Is punished thus:—with grisly craft they sew
The living sinner in a bullock's hide
Consorted with a cat, and fling the bale
Upon the beach beside the sounding sea
To shrink and crackle in the sun at noon.
Then frantic woman, frantic beast, they fight
With sob and yell in stifling darkness wrapped,
Till their contracting coffin smothers them,
And the slow tide crawls up to hide the thing.
You catch your breath and shiver as I tell
That awful doom. But not less terrible
Is yours, the women set apart and swathed
In dark dishonour; for the vilest hides
Somewhere a heart, and all unknown, unhelped,
Against the teeth and claws of throttling vice,
To the last gasp fights for her womanhood.
Is it not so, my sisters?—I see it is.
Your cruellest pain is when you think of all
The honied treasure of your bodies spent
And no new life to show. O, then you feel
How people lift their hands against themselves,
And taste the bitterest of the punishment
Of those whom pleasure isolates. Sometimes
When darkness, silence, and the sleeping world
Give vision scope, you lie awake and see
The pale sad faces of the little ones
Who should have been your children, as they press
Their cheeks against your windows, looking in

With piteous wonder, homeless, famished babes,
Denied your wombs and bosoms.

A HARLOT. My God! My God!

SNOWBIRD. Let me get out of here! This King's a devil!

CANDYTUFT. You've no right to expose poor women so!

FLORIMOND. These never can behold your Universe.

MAMMON. They shall be shown.—Sisters, I blame you not;
I hurt you as the surgeon hurts to heal.
The horror of yourselves that stifles you
Is in its essence hope and happiness.
I spoke of sin and sinner, using words
That must be used until the common mind
Escapes from Christendom to the Universe.
You have no souls, therefore you cannot sin——

SNOWBIRD. Who says I have no soul? You're mad, King Mammon.

CANDYTUFT. And souls to damn too, damn him!

MAMMON. I have no soul——

SNOWBIRD. Indeed, and one would think it!

MAMMON. There's no such thing
As soul, but only matter and its powers
Stupendous, which our blood and brain transmute
To thought, emotion, passion, fancy, love.
The vapours radiant in a million stars,
Contracted and condensed as mind in men——

The harlots *cease to attend and whisper to each other.*

MAMMON. They cannot grasp it, cannot bear to listen.
The thing I have to tell, unthought before,
Demands another language, another folk

Than any earth contains: I fear it.—Harpur,
Dismiss these women.—Harlots of Christianstadt—
(A moment, Harpur)—remember my decree:
The money will be paid you, twenty pounds
For your redemption; and in ten weeks' time,
She that regards herself, may pleasantly
Renew her youth and start the world afresh,
A virtuous woman scorning man's embrace
Except with passion and instinctive love
Obsequious and fruitful. Hitherto,
Your love has been too immaterial,
A thing of other world, becoming well
The spirit and corner-stone of Christendom.
Bestial and of this world your love must be——

FLORIMOND. O King!

MAMMON. I'll make them think.—I say again
You must be natural and chaste; like beasts,
Unconsciously, devoutly bent on offspring.
Conceive; then live with him whose seed you bear
In closest amity and constant love,
That happy children may delight your hearts,
For happy children spring from amorous joys.
But she who hires again for passing pleasure
The portal of her womb shall surely die.
Now go; in silence go, and do my will.

Escorted by SIGTRIG HARPUR *the* harlots *go out.*

MAMMON. Persuasion fails: it must be life or death.—
The paupers next: I'll see them. Quickly, Harpur.

FLORIMOND. King Mammon, may an old man speak his mind?

MAMMON. And welcome, if his name be Florimond.

FLORIMOND. A harlot called you mad just now; the world
Will echo that, and I begin to think it.

MAMMON. I would be thought so—by the Christian world:
A shallow, economic world that counts
Opinions, gains and losses, and patches peace
With heresies and science. How great it was
When armies drunk with faith, time and again,
Scorning example, in ruinous crusades
Purpled the tawny east with valiant blood!
How great when mantled, masked inquisitors
Excised, consumed, annihilated schism
Obnoxious to the church! Great God, how great!
Then was the world a portent; then did men
Transcend humanity!

SIGTRIG HARPUR *marshals a crowd of* beggars *and* criminals *of both sexes and advanced in years; among them,* MUNTER *and* PAASKE.

MAMMON. These are the poor,
The aged, horrible unhappy poor;
And these the rascals, worn-out, filthy rogues,
Thieves, murderers, resetters, demireps.
What shall I say to you? I see you leer
With phosphorescent eyes or shrivelled orbs
Opaque, edacious, crapulous and monstrous
Wretchednesses fit to be mocked by devils,
The very proper offal of Christendom.
Show you the Universe? I'll stuff you with it;
Spread out a surfeit of the Universe
In meat and drink, and watch you choke and die,
Glutted with Universe; for I'll not have

The pauper with me always, hatefullest
Legacy of Christ. I'll have no poor at all;
And no incurables, no criminals,
No bedlamites. I'll cut out all that's Christ;
And down shall come asylums, hospitals,
With churches, colleges and culture-marts;
I'll raze out cities and dilapidate
The structure of society to lay the ghost
Of Christendom. How can such folk as you
Endure to live, how dare to breathe?

MUNTER. No fault
Of ours, O King! We didn't make ourselves.

MAMMON. I say, you did; before the world began
The vapours, metals, earths that integrate
Your bodies, minds and souls:—(and by your souls,
I mean the whole machinery of power,
Vital, emotional and cerebral,
Transmuted from bisexual energy
Of lightning and the loadstone, from the force
Expansible of gases, from intense
Alchemical desires, miraculous
Irradiations, metamorphoses;
And from the everlasting passionate
Molecular attraction, pulsing strong
Even in the matter of a mendicant,
With that recondite, interatomic play
Electrons manage in secluded courts,
So infinitely small that elfin bowers
Beside them seem the spacious vault of heaven):—
The substance of your bodies minds and souls
Was as it is—before the world began?—
Before a single stitch of lightning pierced

The sides of darkness and ethereal space,
While all the systems, galaxies and suns,
Dissolved in empyrean slumber, dreamed
Unconscious dreams of orbëd splendour flung
Athwart the firmaments in vast array!

PAASKE. Who is responsible for us, King Mammon?
I never wanted to be born.

A BEGGAR. Nor I!

A THIEF. Nor any of us!

MAMMON. You did; each one of you;
You only are responsible for you.
Who asked you to become the consciousness
Of matter? Not I;—Not God; there is none.
You are the nauseous passion that compelled
Degenerate pairs to put you forth—the root,
The essence, and the cause of Christendom.
I'll purge the world of you. Patience is past!
The sight of such unhallowed ugliness
Dispels the frail enchantment tolerance hung
Between me and my purpose. Cut it out,
The cancer and the sin; for this is sin;—
To be unhealthy, ugly, base, unfit.
Eternal energy, diseased and foul!
Beyond invective! Brand it, sear it, stop
The thing with instant death! I'll not be cruel:
You shall be feasted; gorged and drunk, the end
Shall steal upon you to the sound of strings
Discoursing symphonies; your dining-room
Shall be your lethal chamber; your festal board,
Your funeral bier.

MUNTER. A lethal chamber! Mates,
He means to poison us like homeless dogs.

MAMMON. Like homeless dogs! I'll not endure you.
Earth
Abhors you, and the Universe disowns
The substance of the stars, offspring of lightning,
Ethereal presences, so sullied, so
Malignantly dishonoured——

MUNTER, PAASKE *and the others with hoarse cries attempt to leave the room; but are prevented.*

PAASKE. You'll not be king
A day when this is known.

A BEGGAR. Children will kill
The monster with reproachful looks!

ANOTHER BEGGAR. And women
Stone him to a pulp!

MAMMON. They have their greatness, too—
The will to live even in the last disgrace:
This is the universe within them, loath
To lose self-consciousness in any plight.—
Fill up the room with soldiers:—soldiers, man's
Authority and power in terms of man:—
Yet must I speak; yet must I say the thing
I am the furnace and alembic of,
Distilling tidings of eternity
In every cell and chamber of my brain.

HARPUR *has filled the space in front of the dais with* soldiers, *who enter by the door at the back.*

MAMMON. You see: I hold you in my hand, as Heaven
Was once supposed to do; and on my nod
Your lives depend. But I am gracious now;
And you shall choose. Man is my prisoner, guilty
Before the universe of growing old;—
What is more loathsome than extinct desire?

I'll leave no impotence alive in Thule,
Nor any woman past conception! Cult
Of age is Christian: only youth should be,
Should have, should do, should rule.

FLORIMOND. Old age was held
In high repute before the Christians came.

MAMMON. And so it was! Everything foul and false
In pagan usage, weaknesses, decay,
The Christians saved and loved:—high time it is
To put an end to all senility!
Another count against my prisoner, man,
Is clumsiness—a Christian salvage also.
Your intellects are clumsy; you are found out—
Beggars and criminals; the crafty rogue,
The clever mendicant deserve to live
Compared with you. And last is ugliness,
The very brand of Christianity.
You all are ugly—men and women, ugly,
Though once you painted Raphael's pictures, once
Erected Gothic wonders. So ugly, you,
Misshaped, degenerate, asymmetrical,
You should be glad to die! The will to live,
The will to power, the will to happiness—
These are but ministers, the separate strands
And conformation of the will to beauty,
The hidden secret of the Universe.—
I blame you not; you could not help yourselves;
But knowing now what noxious things you are
You ought to die at once. I will decree
That ugliness is criminal, and build
A rich pavilion high upon a hill
For folk to die at dawn and sunset in,

With music, costly wines, and perfumed death
In vapours of decay. In silence go.
I bid you die at once. Go hence, and die.

The beggars *and* criminals *go out.*

MAMMON. Soldiers, I love to see your wholesome faces:
My army, only implement of kings.—
That hideous human offal! The harlots pleased me;
But that was horrible.—The legate now;
I'll see him first; and afterwards, the abbot.

FLORIMOND. I wish to speak of these, King Mammon.

MAMMON. Speak.

FLORIMOND. Untried and unaccused they lie in prison.
Not only Thule, but Europe calls for justice.

MAMMON. Without an army like a hobbled horse
One stumbles in the tether of the law.
Diplomacy, chicanery, statesmanship,
Become the masters of the unarmed king.
I waited on my army; and now intend
Such justice as omnipotence may deal.
The legate, quickly:—in another room,
For this is foul with decadence of man.

SCENE II :—*A room in the Royal Palace.*

MAMMON [*to an unseen* attendant *as he enters*].
Tell Florimond to send the legate here.—
It drives me breathless onward. Will it hurl
Me headlong to my ruin? Am I mad—
So hounded, scourged, hallooed? If one profound,
Religious soul, ambitious, able, learned,
Would understand me! Oswald loves and serves
In fear and wonder. Guendolen adores;
But when her passion cloys, her mind, relaxed,
Will sink supinely on her Saviour's breast.
Only by fire, by slaughter can the earth
Be purged of Christendom. By talk, by books,
By argument, apparent things are done;
But actual change by war alone arrives.
Yet still I try what eloquence can do:
I have this letch of speech, this power of vision.
Were Anselm mine—the legate; could I turn
A man of such a temper, so refined
A worldliness, so certain of himself,
From the state polity he calls his God,
To Mammon, me and my great universe,
Then might the bloody torrent I behold
Sweeping the serried crosses from the world
Sink in the earth, and in my wounded thought
Ebb and be staunched, and the fierce fire put out
That roars and rustles in my heart and brain.

ANSELM *enters.*

MAMMON. Anselm, in damning me you overreached

Yourself: your dislocated will must pain
You, like a twisted ankle.
ANSELM. Yes; to-day,
In every country crucified, the church
Endures the utmost spite of men.
MAMMON. I like
The church of Rome.
ANSELM. How dare you say it, King!—
God's enemy and man's?
MAMMON. It puzzles you?
I am the enemy of God and man—
The European-Yankee man, who thinks
In terms of God and Christ and other world;
And yet I say I like your church of Rome.
That puzzles? Yes.—Are you a Jesuit, father?
ANSELM. I am a Jesuit.
MAMMON. Most romantic tribe,
That failed in everything they undertook.
And why?
ANSELM. Because of meannesses in men.
MAMMON. Because they used, abused and multiplied
The meannesses of men! Men are not mean,
Though meanness may by meanness be induced,
As ghosts are raised by self-deluded seers.
All men are great—all men: I say, all men.
Your greatness I appeal to. Centuries
Ago your decadent Catholic Church
Had peremptory notice to be gone;
Yet still it haunts the world, the subtlest power,
The sweetest and the strongest. Rome's a vase,
Empty, discoloured, dusty, chipped and cracked,
So full of roseleaves once, of martyrdoms,

Of blood, of tears and of the wine of life,
That its memorial savour, unexpired,
Enthrals the doting world.

ANSELM. The faithful world,
That finds in Holy Rood the tree of life.

MAMMON. It was the tree of life for many an age.
Sprung from a little seed in Bethlehem,
It flourished high and higher, and broad as Heaven,
Hiding the stars; its roots in every heart;
Its foliage fed with fragrant breath of prayer;
Its blossom and its harvest, the opulent
Imaginings of two millenniums.

ANSELM. O king, you speak with most inspiring sense
Of greatness and of glory in the church!
The tree is for the healing of the nations;
Beneath its arms——

MAMMON. Bad shelter in a storm.—
You interrupted me.—A long-lived tree;
But now it's dead. Its bole, a crypt of dust;
Its withered, creaking boughs, shored up and braced
Against tempestuous time and old decay.

ANSELM. Yet nations shelter in its branches!

MAMMON. Yes;
Imagination knows no other home.
But I am here to fell the hollow trunk,
To faggot all the dry wind-shaken limbs,
To stub the twisted, earth-shot roots that sprawl
The pathway o'er, tripping adventurous feet;
And in that old symbolic stead divulge
The matter of the universe itself.

ANSELM *regards* MAMMON *disdainfully.*

MAMMON. They say you are a master mind, instinct
With science and the culture of the schools,
And one to whom the facets of man's soul,
The ways of fate, the labyrinthine world,
Are known enigmas. Such a friend I want.

ANSELM. An honest-hearted man of single mind,
I walk with God as closely as I may.

MAMMON. But I would have you march in step with me.

ANSELM. The road you travel strikes across God's path.

MAMMON. Not so; my road begins where God's leaves off.
The narrow way men trod with bleeding feet—
Where think you does it lead?

ANSELM. It leads to heaven.

MAMMON. Say so; but what is heaven?

ANSELM. The abode of bliss,
Where ransomed souls enjoy the glory of God.

MAMMON. And where is that?

ANSELM. Above, beyond the stars.

MAMMON. I think so, too; but I materialise.
The narrow way, unluckiest, longest lane
In man's itinerary hitherto,
Turns off at last with me, the first to reach
The turning, straight into the broad one, heaven
On earth—which is the one and only heaven.

ANSELM. The narrow way leads straight into the broad one?

MAMMON. Yes, father; that's the world's eternal route.
I see the turning at the long lane's end,

A twilight avenue of tangled thorn;
Its curving spines blood-stained; its flinty path
With purple mottled; gloom and doleful sounds
About its porch of writhen boughs, wherethrough
A crowd of pallid cheeks and eyes amazed
Come halting from the hideous byway, straight
Upon the broad, green thoroughfare of kings,
Adventurers, warriors, dancers, pleasant folk
Among the joyful birds and summer flowers.
So ends at last the Christian era; so
Does every era end. Recurrent time,
The vagrant bedesman of the infinite,
Through many a Hades and the trough of Hell,
Over Olympian heights, and past the jasper
Walls of the golden city, homeward-bound
Instinctively, in every period gains
The broad way of the earth: there are we now,
After the centuries of Christendom—
Which mean to me a moment's madness only;
And here am I, with power to alter time
From that old wiseacre of scythe and sand,
To youth and favour, beauty and delight,
A damsel mantled in eternity,
Who takes no turning into narrow ways,
But singing clearly in the constant dawn,
Before the splendid world by royal roads
Moves ever onward to an unknown goal.

ANSELM. Get thee behind me, Satan!

MAMMON. I reach your heart?
I touch your understanding?

ANSELM. Seduction rides
Upon your tongue, King Mammon, and youth and grace

Perturb my soul: old men like me, forbid
The joys of life, love, offspring, tender cares,
Forget themselves when striplings woo their thoughts.
But God is not forgotten. You are supposed
A murderer, and I think it.

MAMMON. No murderer, priest:
But were I worse than murderer, how should blood
Belie the truth of what I have to tell?
No more than turning rods to serpents shows
That two and two make five. Suppose I say,
"The earth is flat, and I shall prove the same
By raising from the grave a man long dead?"
The Jew Appella or a Scottish Kelt
Would not be taken in! A man might spill
A life a day, yet be a good logician,
And play a sweet adagio on the flute.—
I am keen to make you mine.

ANSELM. That cannot be.
You deal in images:—when you can turn
A negro white by argument, reverse
The sexes by transfusion, or evolve
Baboons from men by grafting tails, expect
To change my faith.

MAMMON. Were you upon my side
The world would pause before condemning me:
I must have old men, wise, renowned and good.
Father, I shall convert you to my thought,
Show you my vision of the Universe,
And pluck you from the burning; in your own terms
I'll do it:—your exaltation of the Host,
Your triune God, your ardent Heaven and Hell,
Your wonderful parthenogenesis.

ANSELM. Why shame and torture me with blasphemy?

MAMMON. No word of blasphemy shall pass my lips.
Know father that the wildest thoughts of men
Are true as true, for matter cannot lie,
And men and thoughts are matter: material truth
Behind the immaterial symbol hides,
As priests conceive of God behind the veil.
Self-consciousness, imagination, soul
Are forms of matter as the lightning is,
As gold and phosphorus and gases are—
Matter eternal, diverse, mutable.
Like all the mythic intercourse of Heaven,
Adonai's commerce with the virgin means
That man is more than man, and with his bride
Engenders righteously the manifold
Illimitable universe itself,
Continuing in sense and consciousness
The ether and the substance of the stars.
Immaculate conception intimates
The purity of women in all their functions—
Wonderful partners, virginal every month,
Sweet votarists of the moon. Celestial glory?
Remembrances of being unbegun
In old ethereal eternities.
The intolerable tragedy of Hell?
Encaustic records of the pristine fire
In every passionate ion branded: these,
Achieving consciousness in man, reveal
His pure material nature. You exalt
The Host, and eat the body of the Lord
In ecstasy of adoration: great,
And in the very essence of it true!

How just and right that out of all the Christian
Travail of Calvary, and Martyrdoms
Forgotten by the thousand, this issue leapt
To sheer pre-eminence :—"Is that bless'd bread
The body of God or not?" The body of God!
It is the sun, the earth, the elements,
Sirius and Aldebaran and Mazzaroth,
The ether, and the lightning and the light,
The whole illimitable universe.
O father, see you not how great it is!
The rapture and the glory of the Mass
Predicted me, and the high news I bring.

ANSELM. Dismiss me, King! To listen is to sin!

MAMMON. I move you, Anselm? I can make you
mine!
Carbon, and those aerial potentates—
Azote, which men call nitrogen; the virile
Sultan of all the elements, oxygen;
The brilliant vapour of the hottest stars,
The lady of the water: principal
Components of the visible Universe,
And the main fibres of infinitude,
Are we, our food, our drink; and every meal
Is eucharist, and every dining-room
A temple.

ANSELM. Gracious images, King Mammon;
Most immaterial figures! How can one
So specially endowed with fancy choose
A disenchanted world?

MAMMON. You mark me not.
I rend in twain the old moth-eaten veil
You Christians juggled with, and show mankind

The enchanting matter of the Universe.
All ancient fantasies of spirit things
Are types of matter. Take your triune God,
The effort of the conscious Universe,
Not yet self-conscious, to enunciate
The triple form of matter:—Dynamic ether,
First person of the Trinity whence all
Derives;—the polar tension couched and wed
In every atom—Force, the Holy Spirit;—
The ponderable elements whereof
The galaxies and systems, beasts and men,
Stars, flowers, amœbas, lichens, lice consist
Are each and all the well-belovëd Son.

ANSELM. Why change it then, this old belief in God,
So hallowed, pregnant, satisfying, true?

MAMMON. To-day a damnable and damning lie!
We know there is no God—no God who made
The world and man, pitched high above us heaven,
And underneath sunk Hell. The wistful hearts
That meditate emasculate immanence
In place of the Almighty overthrown,
Degrade the world below the darkest age.
The inbred fault and meanness of the time
In art, in thought, in polity, in trade,
I charge directly to the ruined will
That neither takes nor leaves the Omnipotent
Creator, the immortal soul of man,
Heaven, Hell, the Cross of Christ, and all that once
Was great in Christendom when God meant God.

ANSELM. God is a fact for me and for my church.

MAMMON. What was a fact has now become a symbol;

And in a symbol only phantoms live,
Gigantic Brocken spectres, Boygs, mobs,
Anarchic spiritisms, democracies,
Denationalisation of the world.
I want a home for greatness, and I take
The Universe wherein to be and do:
I and my people shall eclipse renown.

ANSELM. God makes men great: without God man's a beast.

MAMMON. I say so too:—Without God man's a beast.

Back to the beast! We must get back to the beast:
"Get thee behind me, God!" shall be our cry.
From lower forms of life out of the ether,
By way of lightning and the nebula,
The king of all the beasts arrived at last.
There I begin again as if no time
Had ever been: no metaphysical
Consideration, myth or wonderworld
Installed in space by sorrow and ignorance;
No moral law insidiously wrought
To play the pandar to malignity;
No gyves of right and wrong to shackle power.

ANSELM. O King, though many an honest conscience breaks
The frame and form of Christianity,
The ethic heart of it remains to sway
Behaviour and to point the heavenward path.

MAMMON. Ultimate cowardice and hypocrisy!
The Christian ethic and the Christian creed
Are head and heart of the anatomy:
Dissect out either and you have for guide

A withered skull labelled beneath a glass,
Or sodden preparation in a jar.
Four centuries of sects, denominations,
Of hydra-headed variance and protest loud,
Broke up the showy coffin, undid the cloths,
And tore the stuffing forth—to find no God
Inside the thing or out. Aghast and hushed
In droning compromise, fain would they use
The old embalmment, all its virtue gone,
Fain swathe and join again the empty limbs
With tattered cerements crumbling into dust.
Alone the church of Rome continues still
Your perfect mummy, gilded, painted, spiced;
Alone, and worthy in unworthiness,
Lives in its vision of the Universe,
The stage complete:—Heaven, Hell, the earth between,
A righteous God, a sinful man, and Christ
To make atonement while the Virgin prays.
Not in an emblem of the Universe,
A tale, a coarse archaic mythologue,
But in the matter symbolized I mean
To root the mind of man. The priceless earth,
That like a pearl within an oyster lay
Between your Heaven and Hell, I shall transmute
To adamant; and for your jewel-box,
Your closed and padlocked Hell and Heaven that choke
Imagination, I shall give mankind
The spacious casket of the Universe
For ever open—systems, wastes of stars,
Room for a million million sinful worlds,
Ethereal room for every wandering thought.

ANSELM. In God's great name sully my soul no more!

You tempt me not—except to scorn. By heaven,
I sin too much in converse with a wretch
Under the greater excommunication!
How long, O Lord, how long is power withheld?
When shall Thy Churchmen, militant again,
With necks of kings for stirrups conquering ride?

MAMMON. "With necks of kings for stirrups!
The sound I like!
Ambition, jealousy, revengeful lust,
The scouted moods I mean to make so great,
Material essences of action! You
I want, and all the power and pride of Rome,
The wilful, passionate, executive
Fraternity of kings and warriors. Folk
That live in every bodily organ hard
As driven machinery on a record run;
That ask and take no less than just the whole
Great Universe itself, as due to them,
As being them and theirs; for them I'll spread
The banquet, carve the world, and set the time—
The first hour of a known eternity.

ANSELM. O King, material voices fail to reach
The portal of the spirit's audience! God,
For some high purpose fixed ere time began,
Withholds His favour and relinquishes
The kingdom of the soul, permitting wrong.
But when this pregnant age and travail fierce
(Religion's Chastisement) determine, look
For prophecy fulfilled, and God's great dream,
Which our so seeming solid matter is,
Sublimed, installed, accomplished and assured
Eternally in substance spiritual—

New Heaven, new Earth beyond the grasp of sense.

MAMMON. This is the huge insanity of the world,
The time-old morbid mind that fears itself,
Unknowing and unknown. How great are men
To fashion out of ignorance and dread
Such greatness! For I know your spirit-world
Better than any prophet, poet, priest,
Philosopher, occultist, mystic, seer.
Hear me expound your dual universe:—
Man is a spirit, and his various life,
A bodying forth of the invisible;
The Universe and forms of time and space—
The garment and the symbolism of God;
The elements, the stars, earth and its brood—
The self-analysis, precipitation,
Pomp and deployment of the absolute:
The visible's the immaterial;
And only spirit's matter and momentous.
A noble Universe whose furthest nook
Is still a suburb of the City of God;
Where every star and every blade of grass,
Where every pulse and every thought reveals
The hallowed presence of divinity!

ANSELM. You sin against the light knowing so well
What apparition matter is, and all
The Universe a mere similitude
And mutable appurtenance of God.

MAMMON. No God; no spirit; only matter. God?
The cowardice of men flung forth to fill
With welcome shadow an imagined void—
Which never was, which by no chance can be.
The unconscious ether fills the universe,

Omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent:
No interstice in matter anywhere
Even for the daintiest elf of other world;
And in the infinite no interval
To harbour alien immaterial dreams.

ANSELM. But spirit, God, may be material stuff,
Of the same substance as the stars and us.

MAMMON. Not spirit, then; not God. You *know!*

ANSELM. I do.
And may God pardon me my flash of sin!

MAMMON. Afraid of mystery men explained the unknown
As something immaterial—spirit, God.
But there's no mystery hidden in the unknown;
There's nothing in the unknown; there's no unknown.

ANSELM. O King, the darkness! There the unknown hides!

MAMMON. Darkness?—negation; nil. Light?—wonder; woven
Magnificence of seven mysterious stains,
Ethereal substance of the universe.

ANSELM. Bethink you, King; the silence of the night——

MAMMON. Silence that misanthropes have praised so, golden
Against the silver sound of speech, is dull
Inanity: the mystery of the whole resides
In music—substance of the ether tuned
To audible enchantment. Time's a lie,
And space a trick. Eternity's the truth:
Infinitude, the all-dynamic vast,
Mystery of mysteries, known to any one,

The everlasting durability
Of the immeasurable universe;
For all is matter, all is mystery, all
Is known: we are the universe become
Self-conscious; and nothing anywhere exists
Not us. All men are great, all men: unmade,
Incomparable, immeasurable, free—
The eternal Universe become self-conscious.
I'll have you understand this here and now,
Accept its truth and change the world with me.
My patience ends: I bring the greatest news;
I'll have it welcomed. We ourselves are fate;
We are the universe; we are all that is:
Outside of us nothing that is not us
Can be at all. No room! The universe
Is full of us, the matter of the stars;
The all-pervading ether seen as light,
Elaborate purity of rainbows; heard
As music, woven of elemental sounds;
And smelt in perfume, the poetry of flowers
Exhaled from sex, which in all plants and beasts
Secretes and sows the ethereal universe.
Seen in the light, in music heard, and smelt
In subtle odour of a thousand flowers,
In us the ether consciously becomes
Imagination, thought, religion, art.
We are the ether, we are the universe,
We are eternity: not sense, not spirit,
But matter; but the whole become self-conscious.
Whatever Heaven there is, whatever Hell,
Here now we have it; and I cannot wait
On God, the nothing, and his damned event

That mocked the world for sixty centuries;
Nor will I linger eating out my heart
While this new proxy of divinity
Your specious evolution, blunders on
From tedious age to age. I'll carve the world
In my own image, I, the first of men
To comprehend the greatness of mankind;
I'll melt the earth and cast it in my mould,
The form and beauty of the universe.
Say after me "Get thee behind me, God;
"I follow Mammon." Say it, say it!

ANSELM. God
Is God, eternal and unchangeable,
The God of my salvation.

MAMMON [*seizes* ANSELM *by the throat*]. Hideous liar,
Abominably old and impotent!
You know there is no God, no soul at all,
But only matter, ether polarised,
Condensed and shown and felt and understood,
Beholding, feeling, thinking, comprehending,
The subject-object of the Universe.
"Get thee behind me, God; I follow Mammon."
Say it, before I fling you at my feet,
Abhorred senility, and stubborn past
Of the world! Say it, antiquity!

ANSELM. Release
Me, King.

MAMMON *flings* ANSELM *from him violently.*

ANSELM *staggers and falls with a loud cry.*

MAMMON. Old craven heart of man, from truth
Divorced, God's creature, famulus and fool,
Go back to Rome and tell the triple-crown——

FLORIMOND [*who has entered quickly and is kneeling beside* ANSELM].

He'll ne'er see Rome again: the legate's dead.

MAMMON. Dead! Anselm dead! How dead? Dead in the spirit—

Like all the world to all material truth,

Senseless and dead.

FLORIMOND. Dead as a carcase, King.

How quickly he grows cold!

MAMMON. Why should he die?

A wine-glass falls and breaks. Is human stuff

As brittle? Come; help him to his feet.

FLORIMOND. The man is dead. His heart: to-day the world

Trembles with broken hearts; the pace of life

Exceeds our staying power. [*Rises.*

MAMMON. I'm glad he's dead,

He was so old: old age is horrible.

I gripped his skinny throat; his yellow eyes

Bulged from their sodden wrinkles; between his jaws

His false teeth clattered; I shook him and he fell.

He would not say, "Get thee behind me, God;

I follow Mammon."—You say that, Florimond.

FLORIMOND. If the King commands.

MAMMON. O, but you'll mean it too!

FLORIMOND. Except the King's commands I have no meaning.

MAMMON. Say it; mean it.

FLORIMOND. In presence of the dead?

MAMMON. Why not in presence of the dead?

FLORIMOND. There hangs

A mystery in the air: the unseen—felt,

And almost heard.

MAMMON. Mystery of mysteries, death!
The ether to the ether whence it came
Returns again; to darkness, silence, peace,
The wide oblivion of the universe,
The rapture of the infinite.

FLORIMOND. O King,
There may be God and judgment! I am old—
Like him that lies there; and my heart's worn out;
But in some part of me a fibre wakes
Rekindled at the quickening thought of death.
How can I say and mean so utterly
Against the ancient texture of my soul?
To turn a river at its outflow, cast
The entrails and the vitals of the mind
At threescore years and ten——

MAMMON. Dispute with me?
Pronounce my formula!

FLORIMOND. "Get thee behind——"

MAMMON. Hush, Florimond!—Three corpses on the floor!
I gave the order for their burial! Look!
They should be underground! Who brought them here?
And left them naked?

FLORIMOND. His eyes expand like lights
That issue from the darkness, growing great!
What are you glaring at?

MAMMON. See, Florimond!
Some one's been widening their wounds: what hand
Profaned the dead and Thule's royalty?
Their wounds like leeches seem to feel about!
They writhe, they mutter, and they suck the air!

Ugh! Hide them, hide them!

[*Throws the table cover over the body of* ANSELM.

One! There's only one
Beneath the cover! Lift it, Florimond.

FLORIMOND *removes the cover.*

MAMMON. I saw them, plainer than I see the legate's,
The corpses of my father and my brother—
All mapped with wounds and diapered with blood,
Like some torn fabric full of holes and stained.
I say they lay there on the carpet stretched
Beside the legate. Are you the conjurer?
Craft more inexplicable, nightly plied
By jugglers in the street for pence, is known
To be no medium-work, but sleight-of-hand
Acquirable by fools. Where are the bodies?

FLORIMOND. What bodies, King?

MAMMON. What bodies, cavilling echo! Those
That lay there by the legate's, which I named.

[*Opens the door and beckons.*

Two attendants *enter.*

MAMMON. Your fraud again; but let me see it done.
Although their wounds be knots of serpents yet
I'll gaze on them and handle them unhurt.
You stare at me, interrogate each other
With shamefast looks like petty culprits caught,
And stand about as awkwardly as boys
Expecting punishment. Repeat the trick;
Bring in the bodies! It shall not be said
That like some conscience-stricken murderer
I see things!

FLORIMOND. You've seen things, then, King
Mammon?

MAMMON. Nothing but what was there. Lay them again
Beside the legate. [*Crosses to* ANSELM'S *body.*

ATTENDANT [*To* FLORIMOND]. Will your good lordship say
Our business here?

FLORIMOND. Be silent;—and begone.
[*The* attendants *go out.*

MAMMON. They lay here side by side. . . Where are they now,
These fellows? Have *they* vanished?

FLORIMOND. I bade them go.

MAMMON. Then bid them back again!

FLORIMOND. I risk your wrath.
O King, regard yourself!

MAMMON. To have it told
That spirits hounded me into my grave!
Not ghosts, I tell you, Florimond; ghosts move;
Ghosts come and go, gliding with bodily motion.
They lay there, still as corpses—as themselves,
Being themselves, dead bodies, as dead as dead.

FLORIMOND. Shrouded and coffined in the royal vault
Your father and your brother buried lie.

MAMMON. And yet I saw them; not their ghosts; themselves,
By jugglery laid out and whipped away.
Their bosomed wounds awry, and sweating blood,
Like features of a monster with harpoons torn.
Find out the malefactors.—Will you go!

FLORIMOND *goes out.*

MAMMON. To spread it further, stir it and froth it up!

[*At the door which he opens*]
Florimond! Florimond!—let this business rest.
I saw them; but it seems they were not there.
Count it miraculous or a fantasy.
And give these fellows money—a handful each.
Right! Money!—I forgot: I must have money.
Bring it at dinner.

FLORIMOND [*at the door*]. King Mammon—

MAMMON. But you must!

Bring all there is: empty the treasury.
[*Closes the door.*]
The legate! How they hang about my neck,
Dead bodies!—But to see things! Dreams I've had,
Like all men:—does your waking vision spell
Degenerate mind? This was not in my bargain.—
I see them now!—not there; but in my brain—
A photograph of corpses meshed with wounds.
I've heard of lifeless and astonished eyes
Retaining pictures of events beheld
Upon the very article of death:
Alive, mine keep corroded records etched
Through crystalline humour and vitreous, net and nerve,
Upon the tingling marrow of conceit,
Because I looked so long:—my flesh and blood
Upon a trestle; my people's eyes on me,
To fix in mine the pregnant negative
For reproduction in the shadow of death,
As in a dark room—where the legate's corpse
Revealed the latent image. But nothing dwells
Herein, integrant or of any import:
Vision, a polished surface of the mind

(Even less detached) evades our moral power—
Delicate, not degenerate.—What terror once
In damned hallucination lurked when men
Believed in ghosts and necromantic art!
I'll study this delusion when it comes;
Anatomise my visionary dead;
Compel serenity; let thought prevail;
With sights of beauty cleanse, and daily scour
With virtuous deeds, the surface of my mind.
No pause for me henceforth until the end,
Or till I win this world from other world,
And set upon the throne material man
So long deposed by phantoms of his fear.

[*Goes out.*

ACT III

SCENE I :—*A room in the Royal Palace.* MAMMON *and* OSWALD *enter together.*

MAMMON. You are not married, then?
OSWALD. Not yet, King Mammon.
MAMMON. It disappoints me, Oswald. Who is the lady?
OSWALD. Inga the Volsung, King.
MAMMON. The Volsung, Oswald! I had forgotten her.—Older than you.
OSWALD. Ten years. I loved her when I was at school.
MAMMON. We all did.—Is she now in Christianstadt?
OSWALD. I saw her.
MAMMON. True; but resident, I mean? Has she unshuttered the old Volsung house?
OSWALD. The house is open; she intends some stay.
MAMMON. And shall I see her? In my father's time She kept apart.
OSWALD. In latter days, she did:
She could not breathe the sick-room air, the dense,
The rheumy pietism of Christian's court.
MAMMON. Has she her tawny hair and glorious eyes?
OSWALD. The years have made the amazon a goddess.
MAMMON. How long are you betrothed?

OSWALD. Six months, King Mammon.

MAMMON. Useless to ask you why she will not marry.

Save Guendolen no woman speaks the truth:
They cannot, dare not, would not if they could.

OSWALD. She gave no answer; she stopped my prayers with this,
"My mind is changed; I will not marry now."

MAMMON. What if she thinks to give you love unwed?
I said to marry, but 'twas love I meant.
I have not married Guendolen, nor shall I.
As for the law I'll let it stand awhile.
Perhaps there always will be simple folk
Who need to sanction or to legalise
A moral obligation, manifest
As food and drink, a universal duty,
The one necessity and source of life;
Which has, besides, the abandoned grace to be
Delightful, and an all-engrossing joy.
To me the matter's apathetical
On what conditions people conjugate
So they provide a breed of fellows fit
To finish Christendom and clear the road.—
Inga may shy at marriage, and yet love love.

OSWALD. I cannot tell you, King.

MAMMON. You used my name?

OSWALD. I said you had commanded me to wed
The lady of my choice without delay.

MAMMON. The suddenness may gall her: man's conceit
Of woman's appetite.

OSWALD. No, King: it was—
"I will not marry now."
MAMMON. She loved you once?
OSWALD. I thought so, King.
MAMMON. You love her?
OSWALD. As my life.
MAMMON. Then you shall have her; and to-day.
The fool!—
Pardon me, Oswald:—sympathy I've none
With women who refuse to love their lovers.
I'll send for her, and drill her into marriage.
Could I persuade her, think you?
OSWALD. You might persuade
Diana for yourself: I think no man
Can do another's wooing.
MAMMON. A challenge, Oswald!
I'll make the Volsung yours. Another's wooing?
Why, for another any man can plead
With power most manifold: would men entrust
Their businesses, their causes and their lives
To purchased advocates were it not so?
[*Sits down to write a letter.*
OSWALD. Often it is the advocate who wins,
And not the cause; and in the plea of love
The victory with the actual winner rests:
It has been found; the thing is known and told.
MAMMON. Too subtle and too trite: a vigorous mind
Disproves and falsifies the known and told.
I'd blacken and malign the universe
To make the lady yours.—Inga the Volsung.
[*The letter being finished,* MAMMON *summons an* attendant.]

You know the Volsung House?

ATTENDANT. In Watling Street.
It has been closed for many a day, King Mammon.

MAMMON. 'Tis open now. Deliver this at once.

OSWALD. I think you need not send.

MAMMON. Not send! And why?

OSWALD. She meant—she means to visit you to-day.

MAMMON. To visit me! [*Dismisses the* attendant *and destroys the letter.*] Why did you hide this, Oswald?

OSWALD. I did not hide it: how could it be hidden?
But I am sick with misery and know
Myself no more; nor what to think or do.

MAMMON. Yet you withheld the news of Inga's visit.
She has a purpose, and you know and fear it.

OSWALD. Except to visit you I know no purpose.

MAMMON. Yes, but you do: it beats behind your brow,
Shrinks in your eyes, and trembles on your tongue.
Out of your love and fealty tell me, Oswald.

OSWALD. O King, you have fallen into this woman's dreams.

MAMMON. I fallen, I? You have a begging style
Sometimes. Your meaning, Oswald, net and gross?

OSWALD. The Volsung loves you, King.

MAMMON. Impossible!—
Most honest, most romantic Oswald! If
She does, I'll make her marry you to please me.—
She told you, I suppose.

OSWALD. O no, King Mammon!

MAMMON. How did you plumb her secret passion, then?

OSWALD. Her talk was still of you, your looks, your age.
With curtest courtesy she killed my hopes;
Then questioned me as of a public thing,
But with a personal zeal that would not hide.
Your speech, your thoughts, your purposes, your deeds,
She canvassed, judged, commended and condemned.
She wondered if at last the dusty stage
And drudging theatre of the times would see
A great heroic part: and hoped to live
Through years of turbulence, of world-events,
To watch the travail of the demiurge—
For so she called you:—and I call that love.
But you'll not heed her, King: she is a dreamer.

MAMMON. Now, this is rare! I like you for it, Oswald.
That's the true passion:—to distrust your friend,
Mistake the clearest truth; be sick, be sore,
And madly jealous of a woman's dreams.
By me and by my love, my only oaths,
The Volsung's heart will chime with yours to-night!
She comes to visit fate when she comes here;
The spindle stops; her virgin thread is wound.
No, not a word! All this is destiny,
Ethereal doom, and matter of the stars.—
Now for that heinous business of the abyss,
My purpose in the dungeon of my mind—
And in the palace-dungeon. Is all prepared?
Have you the wicked warders ready? Six
Perversions, six callosities, six—things?

OSWALD. I have them ready, six aborted souls.

MAMMON. Then let them rope the Abbot in the rack

And wait my coming. Remember, not a turn
Till I am there.

OSWALD. O King! O King! O King!

MAMMON. You of all men require this discipline:
You are too soft, too sweet, too human, too
Like Christ—the mythic Christ. To do the thing
One fears to do is the first law of greatness.

OSWALD. If there were any reason in it, King.

MAMMON. I have a million reasons—and unreasons.
First, I must torture some one ere I die:
The thing possesses me; and once for all
I'll have it done and out of me. Then I
Myself was tortured—on his urgency
I mean to rack:—three years of torment, pitched
About the seaboards and the idle seas
With Christendom still towering there unstruck.
Then that unmatched, untellable distress,
Lashed to the crucifix, a scalding hell
I conquered, to confront without a pause
Intolerable terror and win again.
You know I killed my father?

OSWALD. Unsay it, King!

MAMMON. You disbelieved it?

OSWALD. I tore it from my heart.

I triumphed there. Against conviction—my own
And all men's—in the silent dark I fought
For you, and snatched a victory in the war
I nightly wage and uttermost defeat
That whelms my battle. Though I knew myself
A murderer, remorseful and undone,
I held you guiltless of your father's blood;
Believed your story—made myself believe it;

And built a chamber for my ruined soul
Within the rampart of your innocence.

MAMMON. Grafted your soul on mine?—like mistletoe?
Then let it grow there.—But you wrong yourself:
You knew I caused my brother to be killed.
In that I am guiltier—if guiltiness
Must occupy us.

OSWALD. No, Mammon; no!
You had him killed because he stole your love.
The heart exonerates that: you found them bedded.

MAMMON. And had your father come with wolfish eyes
Breathing the desert and a whetted knife
To cut your sex away, you pinioned—what?
A hundred deaths! A hundred thousand deaths!

OSWALD. Did he intend——

MAMMON. Did he intend! the knife
Was in my flesh, when superhuman wit
Deceived his God and him and laid him low. . . .
[*Softly; staring at the floor.*]
Low . . . laid him low.

OSWALD. There's nothing there.—By heaven,
Whate'er that nothing is, he sees it! White
To the teeth!—King Mammon, speak! It is your friend.

MAMMON. I saw them in the morning: their wriggled breasts,
That sucked the air in silence with bloody mouths,
Have now a whistling and a sighing sound;
And underneath their half-uplifted lids
Their dead eyes glitter smiling icily.
They lie as still as effigies insculped

Upon a tomb, although their confluent wounds
Writhe to get at me like a clutch of snakes.
The sunlight whitens them and blazes red
Among the ruddy coils—O hide them! hide!

[*Tears the curtains from a window and throws them out upon the floor.*

Thus did I cover them on their catafalque,
Thus when they lay beside the legate's corpse.—
They're gone! You see; no figures mould the pall.
They came again too soon; my strong resolve
To study them and stare them hence escaped
My memory.

OSWALD. King and friend, repent! I say,
Repent! This is your conscience, this is God,
The necromantic sorcery of the spirit
Convincing you of sin. Let us repent:
I shall stand up with you in Olaf's Hall
While you confess our murders; and we two
Will expiate together the blood we shed,
And die at peace with God and with the world.

MAMMON. There is no God; conscience is but a crude
Moralic name for the most wonderful,
Most liberal commerce matter manages.
To do an unaccustomed thing perturbs
The microcosm of man. When solar space—
One modest atom of the universe,
Five thousand millions of our useless miles
Diametrally measured:—when this was still
A-hatching, every time a split-new planet
Burst from the teeming and the spiral sun,
A pang of terror rent the elder orbs,
And every asteroid and comet swerved

Unconsciously dismayed; and so in us
When virginal, momentous deeds are done,
And sudden, awful thoughts in action sphered,
A perturbation palsies intellect,
Maddens the fancy, dislocates the soul,
Imperilling the assembled powers that form
Our being; but when the naked deed has reached
Its orbit, and begun to circle, free
In the all-containing ether, our realm in space
Is richer, greater by the new-born star,
Our rank and system in the universe
Of stabler equipoise, superior note,
And thought and fancy, sense and soul renewed
As in the dawn and freshness of our day.

OSWALD. I have no orbit in your universe;
I fall—down; down.

MAMMON. But my attraction grips,
Uplifts you, swings you steady, as the sun
Retains the planets in his tether:—there,
Like Jupiter, the most majestic orb
That on the golden leash of solar light
Wheels in celestial state, you hang again,
My comrade in the skies!

OSWALD. O gracious King,
Grant me but this:—No rack, no torture; let
Your universe have peace.

MAMMON. My universe
Is in the rough. O, many a heinous deed
Goes to the making of a universe!
We two will torture Gottlieb . . . because we can.
But I have reason for it in my heart,
As elemental as the source of things.—

Do as I told you, and await my coming.
You must be great; you must transcend yourself.

OSWALD *goes out.*

MAMMON. It will be by my tongue if I am ruined,
And by my truthfulness. Speech is a power
That serves us best unused: yet must be used.
Telepathy, exalted and applied,
Might help me here—or else betray me more.
How my mind wanders, idly, at a loss!
I must be swift; I must bring all about
Within a time; for if my brain gives way . . .
I'd have the wit to hide it.—But here's a thing:—
In company I can control myself,
And can control my company:—alone,
All's in the crucible again:—I'll thaw
It out at leisure.—Oswald will leave me now:
He saw me shaken; and the haltering doubt,
That tied him to me, of my father's death,
Being cut by my—(my what?—by my confession;
Wrung from me also in a careless heat)—
He feels himself entitled to rebel,
My Oswald does, aware of what I did.
'Twas instinct to conceal the truth: a son
Might kill his mother and be pardoned; never
His father, for the world is full of fathers—
Whom their sons must spare.—Pass from me, phantom thoughts;
Your home's the Christendom I mean to quell.
And for my henchman, I'll not let him go,
But flesh his soul in every mortal sin,
Until the weapon's tempered to my mind.

Attendant *enters.*

MAMMON. What is it?

ATTENDANT. A famous lady at your door,
Inga the Volsung, asks to see you, King.

MAMMON. Thrice welcome shall the famous lady be.
Say I await her now.

ATTENDANT. In this room, King?

MAMMON. In this room: certainly. Why do you ask?
What do you look askance at? Nothing's here
To frighten folk. Your questioning eyes—The curtains!
I tore them down; there's cotton in the web,
And hempen stuff, and jute: I want all silk.
This was my father's false economy;
Besides, the pattern's stiff: a suave design
In drapery follows best the pliant folds.
I give you charge; have them exchanged to-day.—
And bring the Volsung to my study. Go
Before me. [*They go out.*

SCENE II:—*An underground room in the Royal Palace.* GOTTLIEB *is seated at a table with a breviary open before him, reading by the light of a shaded lamp.*

OSWALD [*entering*]. Most reverend father, you must leave this room.

GOTTLIEB. I know the voice. Who is it?—Mammon's Duke—
Come to release me by some secret means.

OSWALD. To do my master's bidding. Follow me.

GOTTLIEB. But whither, Oswald? To the light of day?

OSWALD. Ask nothing. Quickly come; what we intend,
And you must undergo, shrieks for dispatch.
GOTTLIEB. I am an old man, Oswald; imprisonment
Afflicts me:—old and anxious; active; keen
To be about again. But you are sullen;—
[*Rises and holds the lamp to Oswald's face.*]
No freedom in your looks, nor in your mind.
OSWALD. Of all men at this hour whom terror daunts
You have the worst in prospect. Be afraid—
Most miserably concerned; then gather up
Your soul in God as in a carapace.
GOTTLIEB *replaces the lamp and sinks into the chair.*
OSWALD. 'Tis well for you that you believe in God:
I tell you this in kindness.
GOTTLIEB. Am I to die?
OSWALD. Not yet.
GOTTLIEB. For two events my soul's prepared,
My freedom or my death; but for no third.
OSWALD. Have I not told you to put on the whole
Armour of God? O father, steep your sense
In that celestial anodyne and famed
Specific of the martyrs, perfect trust!
GOTTLIEB. You are earnest, you are moved; and yet a faint
Ironic light gleams in your adjuration.
How must I take you, Oswald?
OSWALD. At my word.
Be lost in prayer; and do as I command—
And am commanded. Follow me at once.
GOTTLIEB. My mind is set on death or liberty;
And thence I will not stir on any vague

Assurance, nor for any artful threat.

OSWALD. Then you'll be stirred.

[*Opens the door and admits six* warders.

GOTTLIEB. What are these ruffians for?

OSWALD. Come after me and learn.—Assist the Abbot.

The warders *seize* GOTTLIEB *and are about to carry him out.*

GOTTLIEB. Release me. I submit.—God keep my soul!

[*Goes out followed by the* warders.

SCENE III:—*The King's room in the Royal Palace.* INGA VOLSUNG *is standing at a window looking out.*

MAMMON [*entering*]. You honour my poor palace; I am glad
Indeed to see you.

INGA. I come in anger, King.

MAMMON. Who has offended you?

INGA. I wish to know—

MAMMON. What! Has the insolence of public spirit
(Most private malice by a virtuous name)
Attacked your spotless honour, Inga?

INGA. No,
King Mammon.

MAMMON. In my father's time the press
Took liberties; but while I reign in Thule,
Pens shall be drilled, tongues tied, thought disallowed.

Not two men in a century can think ;
Not two men in an age : I mean to do
The thinking for a thousand years to come.—
But what has troubled you? You frown again.

INGA. Why do you talk to me like this, King Mammon?

MAMMON. To you? Why not to you?

INGA. Even from the King
The Volsung looks for worship!

MAMMON. And I speak
As if to one beneath me?

INGA. That you do!
I ask my right consideration, King.—
I mean—

MAMMON. To quarrel. But I can tell you this :—
My great conception every hour augments.
I thought of Thule only when I came,
An outcast, to confound my enemies,
Perceiving then no wider, loftier life
Than to reign here and make my country great ;
But that design was embryonic only :
I now intend with Thule's manhood armed
To conquer and demolish Christendom.

INGA. You say all this through fear of me, King Mammon.

MAMMON. Why should I fear you, Inga?

INGA. A woman's tongue,
Tempered with scorn, can pierce the toughest heart.
You know why I am here, and try to stem
My malice with audacity.

MAMMON. You thrust
On me your own procedure. Women fail

Eternally in sexual strife by just
That imputation:—they think men like themselves.
INGA. Do they, indeed! I am not entered here
For sexual strife, whatever that may mean.
MAMMON. O, but you are! With men and women all
Communion's sexual strife.
INGA. And I say, no.
What I, as woman, require of you, King Mammon,
Is that you bend your royal knee to me
And beg my pardon.
MAMMON. So easy for a king!
INGA. Why should you scorn me thus?
MAMMON. You bring me scorn.
Now, had you been a man I cared to please,
I might have soothed uneasy vanity;
But being a haughty woman whom I like,
I rake into a blaze the rancorous fire.
INGA. A woman whom you like! I might have known
That he who sent his callow Duke foothot
To marry me at sight was scarcely man
Though crowned: a boyish king!
MAMMON. They tell in books
How hazardous it is for women-folk
When they begin to think of men as boys.—
You are betrothed to Oswald, are you not?
INGA. I was betrothed.—But did you send your Duke
To marry me directly?
MAMMON. Yes and no.
INGA. O now you mock me past my patience, King!
You have forgotten who I am.
MAMMON. Not so!
You are the Volsung, last of that great line,

The richest blood, the proudest in the world.
I bade my friend, the Duke of Christianstadt,
Go marry her he loved, being unaware
To whom he would lay claim.

INGA. Then *I* must ask
For pardon, King:—forgive the petulance
I misapplied, and let me touch your hand.

MAMMON [*takes* INGA'S *hand and leads her to a couch*].
Had it been as you thought, the loftiest flight
Your scorn can mount would scarce have soared too high
Even to descend upon a kingly head.

INGA. You never would have shot your Duke at me
If you had known I was the unseen butt?

MAMMON. Beneath a royal house you must not wed.

INGA. I shall not marry now.

MAMMON. In what strange mood
Did the high Volsung think to marry Oswald?

INGA. In what strange mood do men and women
marry?
Why did you doom your Duke to sudden wedlock?

MAMMON. Because virginity corrupts the blood,
Distorts imagination, troubles thought;
The ether stagnates in a virgin's mind.

INGA. Your new modality that came to town
A week ago, your assertorial style
That breaks the windows of philosophy!
I've heard about your ether.

MAMMON. How old are you?

INGA. I shall be twenty-nine upon my birthday.

MAMMON. The standard age of women of the world.

INGA. Why did you ask my age?

MAMMON. To gag your folly.

INGA. Am I too old to jest?
MAMMON. Why are you single?
INGA. I am a culprit, then, to be examined?
MAMMON. An enemy of mine, to suffer much,
Who laughs at my great news.
INGA. What! Not a pose?
O Mammon, King of Thule, a man foredoomed!
MAMMON. And why foredoomed?
INGA. You have a mission, King?
MAMMON. I hate the word: call it a message. Must
The messenger be doomed?
INGA. There's no escape.
The triumph for a man who has a message
Is to stop having it.
MAMMON. When I've uttered it—
With cannon on a hundred battlefields;
And spoken it—to you, among the rest.
INGA. I hope not, King; my mind's made up.
MAMMON. I'm here
To make it down again.
INGA. You cannot, King.
It's clad, and locked—in armour.
MAMMON. I know that well:
In centuries of thought entangled; choked
With ancient pity; mailed in worn romance
That rusts into the flesh and festers there;
Shrouded in creed and sepulchred in time,
A living corpse.
INGA. Am I so horrible?
MAMMON. More horrible: a woman of the world,
Who never loved, and has no child to show.
INGA. How can you tell——

MAMMON. Where are your children? Shred
Away in lewdness——

INGA. Intolerable! [*About to go out.*

MAMMON [*locking the door*]. No!
I try my message on you nakedly.
To-day I met the harlots of the town,
The poor professionals: they understood—
As the primeval deserts understand
The verdure of the isles! The amateur,
The woman of the world, will she conceive
By my creative discipline that left
The demi-mondaines barren?

INGA *stops her ears.*

MAMMON. You must attend.

INGA. I will, King Mammon: I know a man in earnest.
But you must speak to *me*; not to a type:
To me, the Volsung.

MAMMON. A woman of the world.

INGA. A woman *in* the world; but moving there
As Hulda moved among the dwarfs, their queen
And goddess: worship I must have from you,
From all men; or in solitude decay,
Unknown but self-adored.

MAMMON. I worship not;
All worship I destroy: I make men great.
Call it self-worship—to be understood
A little; but discourse can never reach
My message, every over-burdened word
Being so bent with meaning long imposed.
Yet must I tell it till my tongue drops out.—
You say you are not a woman of the world.

What would you have me know about yourself?

INGA. What do you mean by woman of the world?

MAMMON. So; let me think:—I mean a man of the world;

They are the same; and this, the mark of both:—
Whatever either sex ignores one knows
The other: not one woman and one man:—
That's to know less than nothing of the world,
Rather, indeed, to unknow;—but women, men;
Men, women; bodies, intellects and souls.

INGA. Then I am not a woman of the world.
The bodies, intellects and souls of men
Are all unknown to me.

MAMMON. Not of one man?

INGA. Not the ninth part of one. Like walking trees
They stir my wonder and a vague unrest;
But could I find a hero—

MAMMON. Well, what then?
Your intellect, your body and your soul
Would pave his path?—Did Oswald seem
A hero that you plighted troth with him?

INGA. O no, King Mammon!

MAMMON. Then why, in every name?

INGA. And I could tell you, too; but should I, King?

MAMMON. You need not, for I know, remembering now
That nothing men and women think or do
Is hidden from me, when once I hold the key.

INGA. Have you my key?

MAMMON. I have, and I can tell
Your story.

INGA. King, your arrogance offends.
MAMMON. Greatness is arrogant.
INGA. But without offence.
MAMMON. I am by nature tolerant and mild,
Gracious, affectionate, noble—like a king;
But on me and within me weighs and works
The terrible commission to undo
The world that is.
INGA. Tell me my story, then:
Our talk has burst all bounds.—But show me first
The golden key of me.
MAMMON. The casket too.
You are a woman in your thirtieth year,
As rich in beauty as the tree of life
With blossoms lighted up and fragrance filled;
Desirable as luxury to toil,
As mountain air to captives, slumbering death
To restless agony; as sex to sex:
Yet have you known no man.
INGA. Had I not told
You that?
MAMMON. Then could I not have told you this:—
A little while ago the Universe,
Sublimed in you to all that's exquisite,
Revolted from the virgin life you lead—
I mean the treasure of your body bathed
In tides of passion like the fabled wealth
And fabulous that clusters, jewelled thick,
In ocean's caves, on fire to see the sun,
Solicited the treasure-seeker, man,
Who brings to light the riches of the womb—
INGA. But I—

MAMMON. —in offspring that shall be again
Treasure and treasure-seeker. Contemned desire
Almost avenged itself in mating you
With one the most unfit of men to broach
Your pent-up passion long matured. You felt,—
"I have no choice; the hero never comes;
Why should I wait? My summer will be past;
This man may serve my turn—"

INGA. I never—

MAMMON. Not
In words, nor even in thought; but deeply felt.—
Then was there news of me; and, from the past,
Imagination summoned names renowned,
Siegmund and Sigurd, and the mighty deeds
And Saga of the Volsungs. Like the dread
Expectant tumult that perturbed the stars
When sentience in the earth awoke at last,
A doubtful hope possessed you day and night;
And hither are you come in pain to know,—
"Is this a hero worthy of my blood,
A king who does at once the thing he thinks?"

[*He embraces* INGA.

INGA. O King, I cannot!

MAMMON. You can, because you will;
You *will* it.

INGA. To be carried off my feet
Like a bewildered girl! I will not, King!

MAMMON. What! Would you have me woo you?
Are you not great?

INGA. O King, I wonder . . . I imagined love
To be so tender and so exquisite.

MAMMON. Most tender and most exquisite.

INGA. I *did*
Consider as you said; you know my heart.
Indeed, you know it all; for even I
Am in my womanhood so dutiful
That I desire a little homage, King;
And to be courted and to seem to yield;
To leave you with a promise and come again.

MAMMON. But these are Christian courtesies; their root
Is self-denial and postponed delight
In heaven—that mirror of enchantment men
Beheld such appetizing glories in,
That with a canine craft they dropped the world
To gain a spectral nothing in the skies.

INGA. The dog was happier, King.

MAMMON. What do you mean?

INGA. Seeking the shadow where he lost the bone
He might retrieve the substance in the brook;
But for the solid joy by man let go,
He dropped it irretrievably in hell,
Whilst high in heaven the phantom beckoned him.

MAMMON. Wit cannot serve you; you would lure me on
With reasons and with fancies to wander love
In labyrinths, and put my blood to sleep.
I'll stop all wit; I'll make it criminal!
With wit and humour, forms of cowardice,
Like subtle reptiles we are scaled about.
Stark, unshamed, heroic, only truth
Itself is courage; and only greatness, great.

INGA. Your message, King; you have forgotten that.

MAMMON. My message is a deed, always a deed.
This is eternity in which we live,
And that predicted heaven of endless joy
This very present moment as I kiss
Your breathing mouth, and make you wholly mine.
We are the mutable and restless force
That forms the universal substance, strained
To knowledge, feeling, thought and fantasy;
And that the universe may never cease
To feel and to imagine, to think and know,
Women are beautiful, and men, entranced
By beauty, win them, though they quail,
To inexpressible delight; and that
Is to be great.

INGA. O King!

MAMMON. Before we grow
One moment older let the universe,
Defeated of its will by your prolonged
Virginity, be satisfied at last.
O, as I hold you in my arms and feel
Your bosom beat, I think that everything
Came into being solely that you and I
Might share together the ecstasy of love.

ACT IV

SCENE I:—*An underground room in the Royal Palace adjoining the torture-chamber.* OSWALD *is moving about the room restlessly.*

MAMMON [*entering*]. Is Gottlieb roped and ready?
OSWALD *nods.*
MAMMON. Answer me.
OSWALD. He is.
MAMMON. I want a copious answer. Speak.
OSWALD. Can you not feel his tremor? The palace shakes.
MAMMON. The prospect daunts him?
OSWALD. When he saw the rack
A palsy took him; and his underjaw
Sprang like a rattle at the warders' touch.
They seized and stripped him rudely. Once he squealed,
Trebling his terror with the hideous sound
Anticipation wrung from him unhurt.
The keeper of the room, treading on air
Like one whose projects come about past hope,
Adjusted him expertly, and disposed
The handspikes in their sockets. With shining eyes
The warders wait, impatient to begin.
He with his carrion ribs and shrunken limbs
Froths at the mouth and sweats, all speech and thought

Beyond the utmost tension of his mind.

MAMMON. Strange that his courage should give out: a heart
More resolute is not in Christianstadt.

OSWALD. No modern man could face the rack, King Mammon:
Refinement strings us to the breaking pitch;
Our anodynes undo our hardihood.

MAMMON. And this is he whose Christian mind recalled
A savage law to shear my sex away!
I'll rack him till his toughest sinews snap,
And all his creaking limbs, unmortised, hang
Like broken stalks.

OSWALD. O, is it not enough?
King Mammon, for an hour my soul has drudged
In torment, waiting here. It was to test me?
Tell me it was to test me! Faithful in all,
Even to this vigil more terrible than death,
You find me, and acquit me of the doubt
That haunted you.

MAMMON. A famous Christian trick
Impossible to me.—Were I to die
I'd torture Gottlieb.

OSWALD. The damage to your soul—
O let me say it!—no triumph can repair.
That for your manhood and the chosen woman
In frantic rage you sinned, courage and love
Absolve you in your heart; and yet your mind
Is dogged with spectres. Now, bethink you, King;—
If necessary tragic deeds beset
Your path with bloody visions, what hideous sights

May madden you, what dreams infest your sleep,
If you exact this cold-drawn cruelty,
This monstrous, callous, needless wickedness.

MAMMON. Nothing is needless—nothing men can do.
I mean to tap the reservoir of pain;
I'll see this mystery through that once enthralled
Religion;—and I'll make a law that men
Who live too long shall die upon the rack!
Thus I'll dislodge the rookeries and unearth
The foul old lairs that nestle in the world's
Intelligence and burrow in its heart!

OSWALD. Make your own soul a nest of scorpions, King;
Your heart, a jug of asps! Bid me untie
The abbot!

MAMMON. Never, Oswald. Quell your fear.
Those visions that attend me, your remorse
That keeps you watchful are material things—
Adjustment of our nature to our deeds:
I told you in a planetary trope
To-day already.—Supercharged with power
To torture Gottlieb I am like a cloud
That must disgorge its lightning, or a thought
Artistic that ejaculates its load
Of loveliness, or strata of the earth
That change their posture suddenly and fling
Whole cities down.

OSWALD. God will do something yet!

MAMMON. The novelty perturbs us; nothing more.
We must be zealous; must devote ourselves;
Not palter with our deeds however strange.
Being the conscious universe at work

That which we do with all our might is just.
After the rack I mean to burn the abbey——

OSWALD. O King!

MAMMON. It can be done: a passage underground
Leads from the palace. You shall be Lucifer
And deftly set a light to Christendom.
I've filled the square with troops to guard the fire.

OSWALD. I suddenly grow old, King Mammon.

MAMMON. Thought
Unacted makes men old; deeds keep them young.

OSWALD. My soul, that was a weapon keen and bright,
Rusts in the scabbard now; my life with sin,
Like some poor beast that in its ordure rolls,
Is caked and clotted round.

MAMMON. But you must shun
The fallacy of sin. Living is rust,
Which if it smothers us in slothful doubt,
Irresolution, idleness, offends
Us as the stercoraceous stuff of sin,
The necessary ordure of the soul;
But by dynamic happiness of deeds
We scour the blade that nature damascened,
While brilliant alchemy of fantasy
Distils the scaled and barkened excrement
Into elixir of eternal youth.—
We have been tortured; let us torture. Come!
By torture men grow great, the prophet said!

[*They go out.*

SCENE II:—*A street behind the Royal Palace. At the back is the entrance to the torture-chamber, on the closed door of which a notice hangs.*

A SENTINEL *enters by the right and goes out by the left. A* TOURIST *follows with a guide-book in his hand and reads the notice.*

2ND TOURIST [*enters*]. That card was not there yesterday.

1ST TOURIST. My luck—
A day behind the fair.

2ND TOURIST. And my luck, too.
I left this to the last.

1ST TOURIST [*consulting his guide-book*]. They've gadges here,
And trip-hooks.

2ND TOURIST. Just the implements I wished
To see.

1ST TOURIST. The most complete assortment stocked,
It seems.

2ND TOURIST. They should have given poor tourists notice.

1ST TOURIST. His new satanic majesty, King Mammon,
Delights to do the unaccountable.

2ND TOURIST. Speak lower! Do you value liberty?
Good heavens! I'll leave you, sir!

1ST TOURIST. Stay! I forgot;
I'm newer here than you.—Observe the porch;—
[*Consulting his guide-book.*

The bevelled voussoirs, very rare in Thule;
And archivolts so quaintly—

2ND TOURIST. What's that sound?

1ST TOURIST. A cat, in pangs of hunger, or of love.

2ND TOURIST. Forgotten when they locked the place up.

1ST TOURIST. Listen!
It's being hurt! Did you hear that?—I heard
A woman once in labour wailing high
With such a shrill persistence.—It's underground.

2ND TOURIST. A spaniel, vivisected:—in the Isles
It was, and at a famous college; I went,
Ashamed a little—my friend would have me go:—
A spaniel, vivisected, lifted up
A dreary sound like that. It's bitted jaws
Were fast; from either opened groin a wire
Explained in some electrical machine
The dog's ideas doubtless, till—

SENTINEL [*re-enters*]. Pass on.

The TOURISTS *go out. The* SENTINEL *halts at the door.*

SCENE III:—*A dressing-room in the Royal Palace.* GUENDOLEN *is seated with a casket of jewels in her lap.*

GUENDOLEN [*sings*].

Without a doubt this love is great;
It melts the world as in a fire,
And casts us in a mould of fate,
The very form of our desire.
Then kiss me, kiss me! Even so!
I have my bride-sark on.
O come love, come; and when you go,
Be but a moment gone!

PROUNICE *knocks, enters, and begins to dress* GUENDOLEN'S *hair.*

GUENDOLEN. Prounice.

PROUNICE. Yes, Queen.

GUENDOLEN. What are you thinking of?

PROUNICE. I, madam?—I?

GUENDOLEN. Yes, woman; you. I know You've something on your mind. Your perfect touch— Is not imperfect; but I feel your hands.

PROUNICE. The soldiers in the square: I think of them.

GUENDOLEN. Of all the soldiers, Prounice, or of one?

PROUNICE. O madam, you mistake me wilfully!

GUENDOLEN. What of the soldiers, Prounice?

PROUNICE. So many, madam! The square is full.

GUENDOLEN [*rises and looks out of the window*].
Why, Prounice, so it is!
The tents are gone, and horse and foot and guns
In order stand as if for instant war.
PROUNICE. It terrifies me, madam.
GUENDOLEN. What should you fear?
The army is the King's; it does his will.—[*Sits again*].
Prounice.
PROUNICE. Yes, Queen.
GUENDOLEN. Aurelian—has he left?
PROUNICE. He sailed an hour ago.
GUENDOLEN. Then all are gone.
PROUNICE. Thule's deserted, Queen.
GUENDOLEN. From Christendom
Cut off! A scion planted out to grow
Alone: the King and I will tend it, Prounice;
Yes, and make it beautiful!—But look at these!
I want you to believe in the one world,
And learn the doctrine out of jewellery.
If I were mortifying of stale chagrin
(And kings and queens have died of that disease)—
O, leave my hair!—if I were dying, Prounice—
PROUNICE *kneels at* GUENDOLEN'S *feet.*
GUENDOLEN. Forgotten, in a prison, underground,
A cup of jewels, with a beam of day
To stir them, from a lofty loophole thrust,
Could charm the darkness—O, and entertain
The sorrow-laden sight of old despair!
Within this golden brazier steep your eyes
As in a healing bath of diverse flame.
They rouse and soothe an elemental mind,
These wanton gems and tranquil: turquoise, blue

As studded margents of forget-me-not;
Brown topazes like crystal wallflowers; pearls
That seem about to be a thousand hues;
Pellucid amethysts and sapphires dark
As midnight; emeralds, clear as water, rimming
A golden shore where the green billow sleeps;
Diamonds, the lust of Judah; and rubies, red
As winter fires and more instinct with dreams:
Whence is their power? Why do we love them, Prounice?

PROUNICE. We love them for their beauty, colour, fire;
Their power is rarity and costliness.

GUENDOLEN. Would men of lineage, rank, ancestral fame,
Courage, romantic daring, faith, commit
The meanest crimes for beauty, colour, fire,
For rarity and costliness, in stones,
Or nacre lustred over grains of sand?
Would honourable women for the same
Surrender to the touch of lewd old men
The treasures of their bodies?

PROUNICE. They do so, Queen.

GUENDOLEN. Yes, but the reason! Why do all people love
To handle gems, to see them, to possess them?
And why do painters paint them proudly, poets
Adorn their poems with imagery of jewels,
And women wear them on their bosoms, hung
In wreaths above those fountains sacrosanct
That well with love and honeyed wine of life?

PROUNICE. O Queen, we love them for their beauty!

GUENDOLEN. Yes;
And for a reason deeper than all beauty,
The very reason of eternity:—
These rubies, sapphires, diamonds, emeralds, pearls
Are we ourselves, embodied colour, light
Incarcerate, the most enduring things
Dynamic ether turns to, the loveliest
And the hardest; compactest forms of matter
That we ourselves are of.

PROUNICE. How can that be?

GUENDOLEN. Because the universe is all the same,
One single substance in a hundred forms—
Fluid or earth, or metal; the breath of life,
The fibre of the mountains and the nerve
In water, is the essence of the gem,
A vapour, oxygen: another name
Would please me better——

PROUNICE. Spirit, Princess? God?

GUENDOLEN. O never let me hear these words again!
Explanatory, deprecative words,
That make an end of mystery, palsy thought,
And shut imagination in a stye!
All, all is matter, all is miracle!
(This casket was my husband's wedding gift:
He told me everything I tell you, Prounice.)
The brilliant agent—artist in precious stones,
Except in one, men call him oxygen,
The virile sultan of the elements—
(You hear my husband's music and powerful phrase).
And what is the exception, think you, Prounice?

PROUNICE. The diamond, Queen and Princess; crystal coal.

GUENDOLEN. Yes, coal: the staple, too, of organism,
The weft of flesh, the body of the blood,
The fertile Phœnix-ashes of the brain
That teem with phosphorescent amaranth;
The fuel and the fragrant fire of love.
All hearts adore the diamond, being flesh,
Imagination, passion, purpose, thought
In crystalline perfection.

PROUNICE. But I adore
The violet, Queen.

GUENDOLEN. I choose a jewel. Flowers?
They wither, die and rot.

PROUNICE. Ruby and pearl
Are scentless, while the violet smells of heaven.

GUENDOLEN. Yes; and my husband told me, too, of that;
A thing so wonderful. Scent is the ether,
The omnipresent, omnicontinent
Beginning, middle, end of everything.
We see it in the light, in music hear
Its rich contexture, and in perfume know
The inmost being of the universe.
Yet scent decays, and rancid odours tell
That even the imponderable ether rots.
Rubies and diamonds, emeralds, amethysts,
Though scentless, die not; and their stains endure
Like unavenged affronts—my husband's words;
Their secret fires, enshrined for ever, burn
Intense and still. I worship jewels, Prounice.

PROUNICE. O Queen and dearest jewel of the world,
You that were God's best Christian, in seven days' time
To turn to utter unbelief and be

The voluntary paramour of hell.

GUENDOLEN. What, Prounice! Are you mad?

PROUNICE. With fear for you!

Dismiss me, kill me, Queen: but hear me: hear
Your silent woman plead with desperate tongue.

GUENDOLEN. You foolish dreamer! Dress me quickly, Prounice.

PROUNICE. Dress Mammon's mistress? No! I call you Queen,
Who are neither queen nor wife. Unchaste
And glorying in unchastity—

GUENDOLEN. Dull drudge!
I did superbly to discuss with you!
Finish and go.

PROUNICE. O Princess, I must speak!
Heart of my heart and treasure of the world——

GUENDOLEN. Prounice——!

PROUNICE. You'll listen when you hear me cry
The heinous truth:—you have become a whore,
Paid with a box of jewels for a night!
What loathsomeness it is for men and women
Knowing the thing they do (not like poor beasts
Driven unawares) to come together without
Religious sanction, sacramental awe,
The glory and terror that make marriage great!
O Princess, you are all disfigured now,
Your beauty and your loveliness undone;
And shame, the desolation of the world,
A barren burning waste environs you!

GUENDOLEN. Your most unhappy eloquence undoes
My good opinion, and your own repute.
How hateful Christians are! How utterly

Abominable in their evil thoughts!
Look at me, Prounice.

PROUNICE. I unsay it all.
O Queen, O Princess, O divinest lady!
Cut out my tongue! It was not I who spoke.
Surely the devil took possession of me!

GUENDOLEN. How can I ever trust you, Prounice! You called me——

PROUNICE. O, hush! You shall not hear me speak again,
Except to say my needful yes and no.

GUENDOLEN. I cannot keep you, Prounice. What you said——

PROUNICE. It was the sole transgression of my life.
Shall I be still your silent woman, Queen?

GUENDOLEN. I must consider.—This great universe
I live in now with pardon overflows:
I scarcely know myself.

PROUNICE. O spotless Queen!

GUENDOLEN. Finish your function: make me beautiful.

PROUNICE *in silence completes* GUENDOLEN'S *toilet and goes out.*

MAMMON [*enters*]. Come with me to the window, Guendolen.

GUENDOLEN *accompanies* MAMMON *to the window.*

MAMMON. I've lit the abbey: at dinner the Gothic blaze
Will shine upon our table and stain the room
With torches, cressets, groves of coloured fire.

GUENDOLEN. So bright as that! You have electric light
In the abbey, then?

MAMMON. Electric light in the abbey!

GUENDOLEN. I thought you meant you had lit the abbey lamps,
And that the sumptuous casements across the square
Would shine into the palace dining-room.

MAMMON. I've set the abbey on fire to burn it down.

GUENDOLEN. O Mammon! Burn the Abbey of Christianstadt,
The pride of Thule, the glory of the north!

MAMMON. It shall be dust and ashes before the morning.

GUENDOLEN. Impossible! Look! All the front of it
Surcharged with fantasy and shadows hid
In quaint imaginations, fast and thick
As multiplying dreams in moonlit woods!

MAMMON. It once was beautiful:—and still I love
The vaulted gate and leafy lattice wrought
In ancient stone whose blossoms have outlived
Millennial ivy; labyrinthine depths
Where light is lost in arboured windows rich
With hues of dawn and sunset—sea and sky,
Jewels and flowers, and mingled wine and blood;
Its majesty of high embattled towers,
And forest gloom of clustered pinnacles:
But it enshrines a lie, and down it comes.

GUENDOLEN. The adoration of a people built
In sculptured stone! You cannot burn it, Mammon.
O dearest, greatest, you must not burn the abbey!
O love, I have a pain here at my heart
As if an eager knuckle knocked upon it!

MAMMON. Therefore I may not burn the abbey:—the Queen

Has cut her finger and the world must stop.

GUENDOLEN. Why should you mock me? Let the abbey be:

Leave it to nature and the mouldering hours.

MAMMON. I cannot wait upon the mouldering hours,
The course of nature and the trend of things;
The movement and machinery of the world
Offend me with their incapacity.
I want each thought to be a deed at once;
Therefore I burn the abbey, having thought it.

GUENDOLEN. But how unthinkable! It will be known,
And Mammon called a base incendiary.

MAMMON. 'Twill not be known; Oswald will never tell.
The passage from the palace underground
Admitted us and led us back unseen.

GUENDOLEN. To do a deed in the dark and run away?

MAMMON. Not great, you think?

GUENDOLEN. Meaner than any treason
Recorded—stealthy malice in a king!

MAMMON. The lightning sets the pantheon on fire;
An earthquake swallows fifty thousand men;
A tempest drowns a navy; glaciers, floods,
Dynamic ages wipe the races out,
And mould and carve and re-ordain the earth.
If lightning, earthquake, tempest, frost and flood
Are despicable, and the ages mean,
Then am I mean and despicable too.

GUENDOLEN. O love, you are a man like other men;
The ill you do will hurt and maim your mind.

MAMMON. I am *not* as men are; but a power that works
Incalculably, and like fate itself
Unsearchable. No one shall question me.

GUENDOLEN. So well I know you, love, the man you are
That I forget the sovereign dread, the awe
And domination that compel the world,
Thinking myself exempt from Mammon's rule,
The partner of his heart and of his thoughts.

MAMMON. But can the wisest share their thoughts? Can *you*
Divide your mind with me?

GUENDOLEN. Not my whole mind
At once; nor ever my whole mind, for thoughts
In revery rise that no discourse can touch.
But I can tell whatever can be told,
And still with subtle pressure of my hand
Partake with you the sense of mystery mute
As moonlight, and across your spirit throw
With looks of love and fathomless desire
Remembrance of unutterable things.

MAMMON. Remember why the abbey should be burned.

GUENDOLEN. O rather think why you should save it!

MAMMON. Not
A bracket, gargoyle, lilied capital!
There is on earth no consecrated stone
I would not grind to powder, however great
The art that carved and hung it in the air.

GUENDOLEN. But must the beauty that came with Christendom
Be all disfigured?

MAMMON. Annihilated all—
Books, buildings, pictures and the hearts of men.
I thought you had come out of Christendom.
GUENDOLEN. I have; indeed I have:—I will be strong.
The abbey must be burned:—possess my eyes
With yours; enchain me, Mammon:—must be burned:
The abbey and all the abbeys; every church;
And all the wayside crosses must come down;
And not a Christian shard be left on earth.
Then, Mammon, then, the world begins again!
MAMMON. To purge the world of Christianity
The sacrifice of every human life
That now enjoys or nauseates the sun,
Would not be too exorbitant a price.
GUENDOLEN. And you and I in Eden left alone!
MAMMON. We two to be the only thought in space,
The sole, clear conscience of the Universe.—
Look, love! A wreath of smoke begins to climb
The weather-wasted mullions; now it creeps
Among the tracery of the chancel-arch——
GUENDOLEN. Like a blue flower!
MAMMON. —That shall be scarlet soon,
With sable boughs and tendrils of a vine
Whose fruit is ashes.—The doting vergers scream,
And rush with flying cloaks like bat-winged ghouls
Evicted from their shrines and ancient nooks.
An outcry, increasing in volume to the end of the scene, is heard.
"Fire!"—shriek it:—"Fire!" You cannot shriek it out;
Nor shriek aside the doom of Christendom.—
Come down to dinner, Guendolen.

GUENDOLEN. I come.

MAMMON. I love to see you eat, to see you drink.
The foolish flesh, the herbs and grains and fruit
You take into your body, I love them too,
For they are you. In gardens, orchards, fields,
Vineyards and seas and rivers you grow all day;
All night your roots drain treasure from the earth;
And herds and shoals and harvests change in you
To beauty, passion and the world's desire.

GUENDOLEN. And these, the herds, the harvests, and the shoals
That turn to love and manhood in my lord,
Are of the very substance of the stars.

MAMMON. The stars are we; we live upon the stars;
We eat, and drink, and are the Universe.

[*They go out.*

SCENE IV:—*The drawing-room in* OLE LARUM'S *house.* CRAWFORD *and* TAMBERSKELVER *enter together.* JELKE *follows them.*

CRAWFORD. Before the others come can you and I
Agree? What have you ready for the world?

TAMBERSKELVER. The great idea, the greatest hitherto:—
That the Teutonic peoples should evolve
A god. I cannot of myself, with all
My sworn inceptors, in a night secrete
Divinity: the old, haphazard growth,
In hordes and savage minds, of heathen gods

Consumed uncounted years and high events
Legend itself forgets: therefore we know
The conscious evolution of a god,
How expedite soever, must yet await
A common bent, a universal will.
I and my compeers brood upon the germ
So boldly sown, the mystery so begun;
But we are few: we need the swarm of swarms,
The trance of myriad fantasies, the long
Refinement of inexorable time.

CRAWFORD. While outworn workers starve! And men and women,
By love's oppressive sequel terrorised
Refuse to wed; or wedding, bolt and bar
The portal where the generations crowd,
Turning the busy thoroughfare of life
To a blind alley at the wide world's end.

JELKE. Disparage our palladium-method, guard
And mechanism of marriage, whereby we save
Society!

CRAWFORD. A mad catholicon,
A killing cure that antedates despair,
And strangles life and love to purchase both,
Upon a sordid altar offering up
The treasured fate and future of the world
In satisfaction of a callous lust.

JELKE. You counselled it! 'Twas you who taught our women
To make the way of pleasure a cul-de-sac,
And close the secret door of life at will.

CRAWFORD. Only a respite for a race condemned
To automatic slavery.

JELKE. Respite only!
Have you a pardon in your pocket then?

CRAWFORD. I have the absolution of the world.

LARUM, RIBOLT, VIBBE *and* STROMER *enter together.*

CRAWFORD [*too preoccupied to pause, produces a handful of money*]. Behold the unpardonable sin itself,
Poor poverty, is promptly cleansed by this—
Your only soap, your only miracle.
The more it's used, the more it multiplies;
And Neptune's barbarous blade of rusty hoop
Will fleece the stiffest upper lip as clean
As any patent razor, if this be plied
With systematic brush. This is the soap
That washes wrinkles out and beauty in,
Restores virginity and swindles death.
The bubbles of it, blown advisedly,
Become enchanted islands. With it, for it,
The fiercest wars are waged——

LARUM. Enough! We scold
Each other like the warring winds of heaven
In epics, and our purposes are wrecked.
Put up your money: some immortal end
Alone can join divergent minds like ours.

CRAWFORD. The scorn of money and material aid
Is still the ruin of immortal ends.
If you command not money, money chains
Immortal purpose to a mortal oar
In this old galley of a world where men
From century to century, age to age,
For ever disenchanted, ask of fate,
"What do we here, Elijah and the rest?"

LARUM. Here are we met to cancel differences,
And find a common measure of appeal
Against the full-blown tyranny of Mammon.
RIBOLT. Appeal to arms! Rebellion summons us.
TAMBERSKELVER. Yes, but the ground. What broader
base than this:—
A new God for the Teutons? A battle-cry
To stir the calmest soul!
JELKE [*to* CRAWFORD]. We want the truth!
Have you renounced all mechanism in marriage?
CRAWFORD. It never was a corner-stone with me.
VIBBE [*to* CRAWFORD]. Do you deny our sacred
human right
To sterilise the proletariate,
And bring the classes whining to their knees?
JELKE. The only revolution since time began!
VIBBE. Escape, salvation, and the way to heaven!
CRAWFORD. It cuts both ways: the classes also
lock
The door of life at will; thus there remains
The same proportion: always rich and poor
In stable equilibrium, whatever change
May overtake the fashion of the thing.
LARUM. The triple cleavage widens, and we fall,
Irreparably sundered.
TAMBERSKELVER. Neo-pagans,
Inceptors and reformers, this juncture fails
To solder us; our triad cannot be.
CRAWFORD. I say it can; but not as neo-pagans,
Inceptors and reformers—three tall stools
That would be always down, as each in turn
Essayed to sit upon the other two.

Our titles and our tenets for a while
We must resign, and step by step pursue
Our common purpose, Mammon's overthrow.
TAMBERSKELVER. Yes, but the motive?
CRAWFORD. Let it be strong enough!
Success endorses motive, means and all.
And for the means:—We want the wealth of Thule.
LARUM. The wealth of Thule! Do you mean the money?
CRAWFORD. The money. To my comrades I would say,
The first and last word of our propaganda:—
Get money; all the money: then we can set
The world to work, sans class, sans mass. The world
At work; and all contented, leisured, rich!
The money of the world will run to that,
With ample annual reserve to be
A pill against all earthquakes. There's my cure
For mechanism in marriage: when all are rich——
LARUM. Or poor.
CRAWFORD. No, rich:—as all will be, when none
Is wealthier than his neighbour;—then womenfolk,
Relieved of every economic care,
Can revel boldly in maternity.
But that's beside my argument.—I want
The cash and bullion in the bank of Thule.
LARUM. The cash and bullion?
JELKE. Break the bank of Thule!
CRAWFORD. One step without the wealth of Thule not
The strongest here can take—beyond the pace
That tedious movements trudge, and none of us

Intends; for we are all self-conscious fellows,
Pledged in our hearts to make the world sit up,
And toast the triumph of our principles
Before we die. With Thule's wealth in hand
We can destroy the ruthless reign of Mammon
That like a three-square barricade impedes
The outset where our roads converge.

LARUM. Destroy
The monarchy?

CRAWFORD. And o'er its ruins march
To place and power. We can accomplish this——

LARUM. What "we" is that?

CRAWFORD. We, forces of the age.

LARUM. And afterwards?

RIBOLT. Great war between us three,
Darraigned to fight for empire of the world!
Foreground and background, middle-distance,—all
The picture and perspective overjoy
The neo-pagan.

LARUM. We take no part in war.
The conflict of opinion and the swift
Emergence of a resolute inception
Engage our lofty hopes. Yet this finance
Disquiets us: to cut the sinews, grub
The roots of war, although we break the bank,
And break the brittle letter of the law,
Would sanction crime as harvest sanctions toil.

CRAWFORD. And so it would! Two things are possible:
To seize the wealth of Thule and depose
King Mammon. I see no further forward: there's
The open road, two furlongs in the light.

LARUM. Then darkness, and the future hiding hell.
CRAWFORD. But I would traverse this illumined way
Though worse than hell behind the darkness hid.
RIBOLT. And I, by all the gods!
JELKE. And I!
VIBBE. And I!
TAMBERSKELVER. For your first furlong, how do we advance?
CRAWFORD. By brutal means abused in every land,
The bomb.
LARUM. I'll hear no more of this: a haunt
For generous conspirators, my house
Affords no shelter to the evil thing
That kills and wounds at random.
CRAWFORD. Mistake me not.
No wanton anarchist am I who flings
A bomb, and flees, a terror-stricken fool
Hoping to terror-strike, knowing himself,
And thinking every man, a coward. I
Am he that never wasted word or deed;
So hold your tongues and listen with your brains.
The high explosive is the friend of man—
The one Messiah vouchsafed us hitherto.
Like all Messiahs crucified at first
(I mean in useless havoc thrown away)
By me it shall be honoured and employed
In splendid services. With fifty bombs
The people in an hour could overturn
All government in Europe; as we to-night
Intend in Thule.
LARUM. No, a thousand times!

CRAWFORD. Listen and understand.—Every third soldier
In Europe as in Thule, calls himself,
With some specific, a revolutionist.
A day's possession of a country's wealth,
And the most abject beggar in the land
Could buy a country's army, and straight upset
Established things. Now here in——

RYKKE [*entering hurriedly*]. Fire! The abbey!
King Mammon burns the abbey!

LARUM. Of Christianstadt?
The Abbey of Christianstadt?

RYKKE. On fire:—the square
By two battalions held; and Mammon, mad,
At a window, watching.

LARUM. Get back your breath.

RIBOLT. Is Mammon Surtur? Is Ragnarök begun?

TAMBERSKELVER. Fire's the bright seed of change! Mammon came down
To till the soil for my Teutonic myth.

LARUM. Now, Rykke, speak.

RYKKE. None fight the flames; the engines,
Picketed off, block up the streets, at hand
Should the fire travel: but the winds are dumb.
In every part the abbey burns.

LARUM. The abbey!
It must be saved! Who'll save it?

RYKKE. I, for one.

STROMER. And I? Not for a new religion spick
And span, and I myself the God of it,
Would I exchange our abbey.

LARUM. Now we feel,

We think, we know: the very shrine of us!

RYKKE. The tombs and trophies of our ancestors!

[*Goes out.*

STROMER. The mausoleum of our storied past!

[*Goes out.*

LARUM. A pier and sea-wall in the shifting sand
Against oblivion and the storm of time! [*Goes out.*

CRAWFORD. The terror of the bomb, more than the fire,
A treacherous pretext, hails these fellows hence.

TAMBERSKELVER. Skin-deep, like beauty, are the souls of these.

CRAWFORD. But ours are in our entrails; anchored, stem
And stern, in flesh and blood; not to be driven
By gusts of sentiment.—Are you with us?

TAMBERSKELVER. I am with you to the overthrow of Mammon.
Thereafter for the Teuton and the God
We must evolve: to have conceived this great
Idea is to be sick with it until
It springs to life.

CRAWFORD. All great ideas help.
For me the world's an economic world:
Philosophy, morality, religion
Begin where I leave off,—that's in the clouds.

RIBOLT. We waste an opportunity. This fire
Engages Christianstadt. Your bomb to-night
Might catch the ear of Thule—a thunder peal
To shake us out of Mammon's tyranny.

CRAWFORD. Let it be tried to-night. I am tired of words;

Have reached that stage where, were I less than man,
I might go dropping bombs at random, just
To make a noise; but when I stake my life
I win or lose the world.—First to my house;
And there the means, the purpose and the plan
I'll lay before you all.

RIBOLT. Words never yet
Did anything: 'tis only deeds that do. [*They go out.*

V

...ing House, Watling Street.

...y, attended by a footman;

...Oswald! Tell him I am

[*Enters the room.*

... Close the door quietly.

...sing the door.

...s a message from the King.—

... Find out for me——

[*Sees* OSWALD.

...ver mean!

If that were all!

... my love for you.

... Oswald.

Not for myself!

...—your sanity

...hereafter, stand

...ry, Oswald.

..., your hurt will heal;

... my life to think

...rt and wounded yours.

... I make you understand!

INGA. I do.
Your words mean nothing; but the sounds express
The frenzy of a lover undeceived,
Whom love had led astray. I feel your need
To see me; and I think 'twas not so mean
To bribe my servant: Love and war are one—
Above all honour and integrity.—
Now you must leave me.

OSWALD. Look at me.

INGA. I look,
And see a young man terribly perplexed;
A strong man, too, but simple; one that does
A woman's bidding always:—therefore, go.

OSWALD. That was I, to the life; but now you see
Pity and horror come to warn you.

INGA. Heavens!
What can have happened in this casual world?
Again a man in earnest.—Tell me all.

OSWALD. When in the morning you resumed your troth,
And left me loveless, I perceived the King
In ambush of your fancy hidden close.
O you may flame with anger; but I know:
When souls are all one wound they understand
Astoundingly. The bruit of Mammon brought
You back to Christianstadt; the thought of him
Expelled the thought of me——

INGA. I spoke of Mammon,—
Certainly; and who wouldn't?—Salient whims
Of love forlorn to strange conclusions leap!—
Go on: the rest of this pathology.

OSWALD. The rest of this pathology is hell

A hundredfold.—You must not see the king:
His thought has whipped about you like a snake
That coils to kill.

INGA. How can you speak, how think
Such common things of me!

OSWALD. Why, when I came
You hoped I brought a message from the King!
O, you must gird yourself and fly far hence,
Beyond the rumour of him; out of sight!
To think of him at all is to be his—
I mean with any fanciful concern
About his person and his dazzling looks,
Or captivated notion of his power,
His purpose and the terror of his deeds;
For terror fascinates, with beauty blent,
Above all witchcraft. Aptly you would fall
Into his liking; and then?—the night comes down:
He must have everything; the heart, the mind,
The soul—from those he loves he drains them all;
And breaks and brays to powder those he hates.
His very touch is fatal; the legate died
To-day when Mammon laid his hand upon him.
For me, whom he has made his creature—God
In Heaven! O God! O God!—I daily die,
And nightly; kept awake (like prisoners jabbed
With lances lest they sleep) by red-hot blades
My other self, remorse, drives hissing home.
And cannot leave him! Cannot go away,
And be the man I was! He has me fast,—
Enframed in deeds like Gottlieb in the rack?

INGA. What do you say? Like Gottlieb in the rack?

OSWALD. I said it: in the rack. I've come from that;

And from the abbey, which we've set on fire
To make the church of Christ the hearth of hell.

INGA. You tell me Mammon racked the abbot?

OSWALD. Racked
The abbot; and I hear his dismal song;—
And more of it I'll hear.—O Inga, fly
From Christianstadt!

INGA. King Mammon racked a man!
The twentieth century;—and he racked a man!
What a gigantic being!

OSWALD. Already caught!

INGA. And then to burn the abbey!—But that's not true?

OSWALD. It's true. And this is true,—that you and Mammon
Ripen to be each other's victims. He,
Soon as he heard your name, recalled our worship,
Our boyhood's joy in you, and hotly wrote,
Commanding you to come.

INGA. I had no letter!

OSWALD. He tore it; for I lied to him, and said
You meant to visit him.

INGA. You did!—A light!
No wonder he displayed no wonder!

OSWALD. Who
Displayed no wonder?

INGA. Some one dear to me.—
What were we talking of? My mind went off
Upon a pleasant errand.—You said you lied;—
And then?

OSWALD. I saved you so for that one time;
And now again I save you. O, you see

The peril! Rather drop into your grave,
Oblivion and eternal nothingness,
Than be renowned in Mammon's legend, thick
With sin like night with darkness—turbulent night
In storm-tossed Thule when the piebald moon
Slinks down behind a swarthy, plunging tide,
And writhen waves break blindly on the cliffs—
As I am broken on the world's wild shore.

INGA. That kind of pathos irks me. Foolish fellow!
Fly hence yourself, lacking the strength to be
Âme damnée of such greatness as your King's.—
When did you rack the abbot?

OSWALD. Deep in the toils!

INGA. But tell me, Oswald.

OSWALD. Scarcely an hour ago.

INGA. An hour ago! He left my arms straightway
To rack a man! How great!

OSWALD. What have you said?
Did that escape you, Inga? Is it true?
You will not answer? "Left your arms," you said.
The slippery truth slipped out against your will?
He sent for you?

INGA. He did not send.

OSWALD. You . . . went!
The vortex of him sucked you to himself!
And he seduced you! I read it in your eyes.
Now—now I understand the abandonment
With which he racked the abbot!—And you smile,—
A subtle smile.—Your thoughts he first debauched
With hurrying words, tremendous images,
And most divulsive message; then your body
Melted like wax.—And still you stand and smile;

For though your body melted your heated mind
Was steeled in Mammon's lust. Women are hard;
Mammon will make them his;—all women, once
They seize his meaning.

INGA *moving backwards and holding* OSWALD'S *glance with her smiling eyes goes slowly out.*

OSWALD. Gone—out of my life!
And into what?—I still forget myself.
My share in this? A more appalling woe
Than any suffered yet! I feel my tattered heart
In anguish drift like seaweed on the surf.—
If I could state it calmly to myself:—
He sent me to prepare the rack. While I
Awaited him, in labour to believe
He meant my trial only, she my love
Had canonized, dissolving in his arms,
Forgot me;—or remembered:—both of them
Triumphant in contemptuous betrayal?
The utter inhumanity of that
Might yet have been the fabled irony
And poignant sauce of fate; but Mammon knew;
Had offered gallantly—so gallantly!—
To plead my cause with her whose virgin soul
He tore to bits without a thought of me.—
There's something here I want; something unhoped
I fear to tell myself.—Have done with fear!
There's freedom in it; and the tenderest nerve
My conscience quivers with is strung and taut
To break the personal power that bound me damned
In scrupulous fidelity. My soul
Recovers hardihood to disavow
Mammon and all his works, and to repent! [*Goes out.*

SCENE II:—*The Watling Street. Enter* OLE LARUM, JAN RYKKE and ULF STROMER, *walking quickly. They halt near an electric standard.*

LARUM. Is that the Duke leaving the Volsung House?
RYKKE. I think it is. He looks about; he comes
This way.
STROMER. That's not the Duke; he never walked
With such a reckless gait.
RYKKE. I'm sure it is.
I saw his face and figure clear as day
By the great arc-light opposite.
LARUM. He waves
His hand to us.
STROMER. Ought we to meet him?
LARUM. Him,
Or any man.—With what a haste he comes!
OSWALD [*before he enters*]. I stand for God. Are you
for God or Mammon?—
[*As he enters*]. Well met, Lord Mayor! Hear me
denounce myself
Before my resolution fails.—Look up:—
You see that light? You know it?
LARUM. The abbey burns.
OSWALD. 'Twas I that lit it; and for that alone
My life is forfeit.
LARUM. That's as it may be.—
Will you combine with us to save the abbey?
OSWALD. The abbey's doomed, guarded from all
approach.

LARUM. But you command the army: dismiss the guard.

OSWALD. King Mammon, doubting me, discerned my mind
As I would read a clerkly letter, plain
With ebon ink and careful penmanship.
Wolfhart commands the troops that hold the square,
And takes instructions from the King alone.
But I believe we can destroy to-night
The power of Mammon at a single blow.—
You heard of Anselm's death?

LARUM. A rumour runs
That Mammon shook his life out.

OSWALD. So he did.—
What do they tell of Gottlieb?

LARUM. Nothing yet.
Is he dead also?

OSWALD. Worse a deal than dead.
Gottlieb was racked by Mammon. I saw it done.

LARUM. What do you mean by racked?

OSWALD. Stripped, tied and stretched
With levers.

LARUM. In the antique frame that's shown
In the torture-chamber?

OSWALD. As men were racked of old.

RYKKE. That ends it: Mammon's day is done!

STROMER. I care not for my life—but to be racked!
It's monstrous, barbarous, out of date, and mad.

LARUM. Your sudden penitence and this strange tale
Require some proof, my lord of Christianstadt.
If we could see the abbot.

OSWALD. Come with me now,

And see him. He lies in prison underground,
Alone, disjointed, a forgotten foe.

LARUM. In God's name and in man's deliver him,
And show the people Mammon's handiwork!

OSWALD. My very purpose!—and it gathers shape.
You know my house stands opposite the palace:
We'll set the abbot in a window there;
I shall address the soldiers; tell the whole
Enormity of Mammon's parricide,
Confessed to me to-day——

LARUM. I knew it!

OSWALD. All
Believed it save myself:—the treacherous death
He dealt his brother——

LARUM. Known to you?

OSWALD. To me
And others:—Anselm's sudden end; and last,
The plight of Gottlieb set before their eyes.

LARUM. The King will speak.

OSWALD. And so will I! A cause,
So private to myself it must remain
Untold, will point, will edge, will barb my words,
And so envenom them that Mammon's heart
Will shrivel in his breast.

LARUM. Whatever course
We follow we must see the abbot first.

OSWALD. Come quickly, then. The abbot's broken body
Will rouse a fury in the hearts of men
That only Mammon's overthow can quench.

SCENE III :—*St. Olaf's Square. At the back is the abbey in flames. On the left a dining-room, on the second floor of the Royal Palace, occupies about a quarter of the stage. On the right rises a block of tall houses, including Oswald's.*

The square is held by troops under the command of WOLFHART : *both horse and foot with several guns and the band of the King's guard.—In the streets entering the square, which are densely packed with the mob, a number of fire-engines and fire-escapes are standing. With the exception of those in the third story of Oswald's house, the windows on the right are lit up and filled with onlookers.*

The windows of the dining-room are closed, but the curtains are drawn aside, and a ruddy hue from the burning abbey mingles with the electric light. A deep murmur rises constantly from the mob, breaking into outcries when the flames leap higher, when a stained window bursts, or a turret falls.

Dessert is served and the servants *have gone.* MAMMON *and* GUENDOLEN *are standing near each other at one end of the table, and* FLORIMOND *at the other with a dispatch-box and documents.*

THE MOB. **The King! The King!**

MAMMON. **I dare not show myself.—**
No money, Florimond. A course begun
With dazzling onset and terrific speed
Can never pick the pace up if a pause
Undoes the spell of action.

FLORIMOND. In two months, King——

MAMMON. Maturity of fiscal monies means
A stagnant time of waiting unendured
By sudden wills like mine.—What have you there?

FLORIMOND. Two hundred pounds: a little more.

MAMMON. Or less!
The horror of it cannot be proclaimed
Articulately: sighs and groans might serve.
My liberty, my mastery of the world
Restrained and subjugated! Where's my money?

FLORIMOND. You have spent, King Mammon; you have lavished gold.

GUENDOLEN *is about to go out.*

MAMMON. What is it, Guendolen?

GUENDOLEN. When I return:—
Something of moment I remember, Mammon.
[*Goes out.*

MAMMON. No money:—and I claim omnipotence.
There's laughter in my heart among the hells
Where judgment sits in torture crowned with flame,
A ruddy grill the cushion of its throne.

THE MOB. The King! The King!

MAMMON. How has my money gone?
I cannot speak to Thule without my money.

FLORIMOND. To-day you paid away a hundred thousand—
Five thousand harlots at twenty pounds apiece.
Oswald and those who wrought your coup-d'état
Have had as much again. You gave the Queen
Three thousand for her private purse; and gifts—
A golden casket of a thousand pounds
With jewels worth some thirty thousand:—truly

A most untenable extravagance :
The royal jewellery is handsomer,
Antique and precious—

MAMMON. Second, hundredth hand !

Your heirloom reeks of Christendom. My wife
Must wear a virginal parure, for stones
Inherit qualities, and bosom-thoughts
Burn in them of the wearers.—My father's hoard
Expended in a week ! I want two millions :
A largess for my army :—for every man
Ten pounds :—to-morrow. Get it, Florimond.

FLORIMOND. It can be borrowed ; but not to-morrow, King.
Finance is not so simple.

THE MOB. King Mammon, speak !

MAMMON. To borrow money? To be without it? Now
I understand the thief : the guiltless thief.
Men should have money ; else they cannot do
The things they would : they cannot eat or drink ;
They cannot live or love without it. He
Who steals directly is the honestest ;
But all are robbers ; money makes us so.

THE MOB. The King ! The King !

FLORIMOND. I wait the King's command.

MAMMON. I think.

FLORIMOND. But here——

MAMMON. I wrestle with a thing
That's in my mind.

FLORIMOND. May I sit down? Old age
Encounters ceremony handicapped
A little.

MAMMON. Sit;—and think.—This never trod
My brain before! It blazes out a path.
Money is Christendom!—the spinal cord,
The body and the limbs of Christendom.
Now, now I know! Now, now the world is mine!

GUENDOLEN *re-enters, accompanied by* PROUNICE. *They bring with them the casket of jewels, and a cash-box containing notes and a large sum in gold. They place these on the table.*

MAMMON. You come like priestesses with measured steps.

GUENDOLEN [*takes off the collar and tiara she wears, and places them in the casket*]. The splendid jewellery you gave me, Mammon.
I love it for itself: and for the things
You told me of it; and because you gave it.
It hurts to lose it; but it hurts me more
To see you powerless. Sell it for the power
Its value represents.—This is the money:
[*Opens the cash-box.*
Throw it among the mob, and speak your will.

MAMMON. O bold! O beautiful! But these are yours:
I undo nothing done. Come, wear them all.
[*He replaces the collar on* GUENDOLEN'S *neck.*

GUENDOLEN. You make so light of me?

MAMMON. A constellation!
We'll load her with them, Prounice: overhang
Her loveliness with stars and galaxies.

PROUNICE *and* MAMMON *deck* GUENDOLEN *with the jewels.*

GUENDOLEN. I'm child enough to like this; but I wonder.

MAMMON. Jewels are wonderful—most wonderful:
So hard, so pure, of such enduring beauty;
Foundation stones of heaven. The exiled seer
In Patmos built the New Jerusalem
Upon the glittering fragments of his fancy—
Matter, all warped and scaled by tribulation,
Age and ecstasy: like jewels fancy lasts;
For mind is matter; and so material heaven
On precious stones, fantastic in the skies,
The creature of a senile rapture, stands
Eternal.—For the money—hear me now:—

A VOICE. Come out, King Mammon!

MAMMON. So surly!—Look—

[*Lifts a handful of money and lets it fall again into the cash-box*]

Guendolen, Florimond; look, Prounice:—Money,
The viscera, the flesh of Christendom.
Though every word of holy writ were lost,
And all the churches, all the crosses down;
Though sanctity and sacrament were sunk
In savage interdict and senseless use,
While money lasts, the accident of Christ
Controls the world: his birth, his miracles,
His sermons, silences, his deeds, his death
Escaped oblivion on the wing of one
Unhappy jest:—one fretful repartee
Alone made Christendom. When Jesus cried,
Pestered by wiseacres, "Show me a penny:—
Whose image and whose epigraph is this?"
The world hung in the balances of chance.
Had those discordant Pharisees replied,
"The image of the enemy of God

And God's elected folk," the pat rebuff
Had been impossible; but they blurted "Cæsar's."
"Render to Cæsar therefore Cæsar's things,"
The answer flashed; "and things of God to God."
The wanton, treacherous wit of it!

A VOICE. Come out,
Incendiary!

MAMMON. They guess that too.—Besides
The gulf that made the dual world, dug deep
By that antithesis, Christ's apophthegm
Of God and Cæsar, tolerating cash,
Transmuted money into blood and brain,
Seed, soul of Christendom. The seed? The soul?
The spirit, the Holy Ghost, the very God:
For look you, Prounice, my most Christian Prounice,
Not only did your Church of Christ become
An instrument of plunder; trade itself,
The necessary merchandise of men,
Ingrafted on religion, zealously
Degenerated into business—fraud
Reduced to system, socialised, condoned:
By heaven and hell and every Christian oath,
A homologue of the Athanasian creed!
The banks, the trusts, the companies are Christ:
His mustard seedling into Christendom,
With foliage of money, flower and fruit
Of money, bourgeoned broadly; and therewithal
A weakness, meanness, littleness in men
Was fostered and tormented. To think of it!
Money and business, in material truth,
The chains and oubliette of the Universe!
Not to be told!—the substance of the stars;

The wandering ether; beauty, glory, power;
Product of sevenfold light and sevenfold sound;
Eternity and space, the universe,
In us set free to know, to think, to do,
To love and to imagine, tamely left
Beneath the harrow of a usurer,—
A hirer; in the clutch of business-men!
And all because two thousand years ago
An agitator passed a petulant jest!
I'll put an end to business and to money;
I'll turn them to their own annihilation!

[*A volley of stones crashes through the windows. Commands are heard; expostulations, shrieks, shrill laughter; then silence, except for the sound of the burning of the abbey, which is now audible through the broken panes.*]

OSWALD and LARUM *appear at the windows of the third story of* OSWALD'S *house with* RYKKE *and* STROMER *behind supporting* GOTTLIEB.

ISLAN *enters the dining-room with several* soldiers *of the King's guard.*

MAMMON. No harm; no danger; but I want you, Islan:—
A moment.—Guendolen?

GUENDOLEN. No; I shall stay.
Now most I love you, Mammon; in your eyes
Such deep etheral meaning wells and shines.

MAMMON. Where's Christianstadt? He sent you, Islan?

ISLAN. No;
The noise instructed me.

MAMMON. Are you in charge?

ISLAN. In the Duke's absence.

MAMMON. He should not be absent.
When did you see him last?

ISLAN. Not since the morning.

MAMMON. Send for him to his house. [*Looks across the square*]. His rooms are lit!
And people in the windows! Can you see?

ISLAN. Not plainly.

MAMMON. Nor can I.—I think he's there:—
Which means an end of Oswald.—Do not send.—
[*To* FLORIMOND]. What money is there in the bank of Thule?
O, quickly!—Gold and silver; say how much.

FLORIMOND. Ten million pounds in all: six millions coined;
The rest in bullion.

MAMMON [*to* ISLAN]. Take two hundred men;
Enter the bank and hold it in my name.

ISLAN. Who fills my place, King Mammon?

MAMMON. Let Siegfried wait.

ISLAN. Where shall I find the keys?

MAMMON. Break down the door!
Churches and banks together stand and fall:
No more salvation, Islan, and no more safes!

[*Goes out with the* guardsmen.

OSWALD. Soldiers of Thule——

MAMMON. Inga has told; and now,
Inspired with rage, he thinks to talk me down!

OSWALD. I who address you—

[MAMMON, *having opened the window, steps on to the balcony and raises his hand.*

THE MOB. Ah! The King! The King!

Incendiary! Murderer! Devil! Devil!

MAMMON. Incendiary, murderer and devil—

[*A fierce roar breaks from the* mob.

So am I called; but I am here to stop
The meaningless employment of the breath
In faded syllables that from the first
Were unrelated to the Universe.

[*The crowd again cries against* MAMMON.

My voice can reach across the square. Be still,
If you would hear what ne'er was said before,
Nor thought until I thought it.

OSWALD. Liar! Fool!

MAMMON. You in the windows, you against the walls,
You in the mouths of streets, regard yourselves
As unparticipating audience come
To hear a trial, or critics at a play,
While I address my soldiers.

OSWALD. Parricide!

STROMER. Assassin!

RYKKE. Abbey-burner!

LARUM. Torturer!

OSWALD. Listen to me! The monster's deeds are known
To God and man; he is, beyond all doubt,
The one and only villain of the world.

STROMER *and* RYKKE *support* GOTTLIEB *in view of the* soldiers.

MAMMON. The abbot!

OSWALD. Do you know——

MAMMON. Wolfhart, your guns
Against these babbling windows and against

The bawlers in the streets.

[*Pause. Commands are heard; the movement of troops and shifting of artillery*].

If once again
A voice is raised while I address you, fire.

MAMMON [*to* GUENDOLEN]. Oswald's no coward; but he cannot lead.— [*Leaning over the balcony.*

To men I know; who love me and whom I love:—
Of Zenghis, of Tamerlane, of Attila,
A casual echo haunts the cloistered mind;
But Mahomet, triumphant still, usurps
The hearts and souls of many millions, folk
Profound in thought and dutiful in deed:
Those other conquerors only scourged the world;
The Arab prophet with the future fed
The minds of men, and fledged the wings of hope
With heaven and hell, the only destiny
Within his ken; he gave them all he had,
And therefore lives to-day devoutly cherished,
Although the whole he gave was but a sign.
For time I offer you eternity,
Presenting to the world the Universe;
And having wiped it clean of Christendom
Intend a new beginning. Many starts
The world has had, but always old beginnings
Derived and eked and patched from hackneyed creeds.
I start as if before me never a thought
Had crossed the brain of man. If Tamerlane
Began with sixty followers, Mahomet
With two or three, I, with the might of Thule
And such a passion of belief, so rapt
A vision of the Universe, so great

A consciousness of power as now imbue
My being and empanoply my will,
May heedfully attempt a purpose vast
As change itself, and more momentous, more
Achievable than any ever yet
Accomplished by crusader, outlaw, king,
Warrior or world-compeller; for the age
Awaits me and the ancient systems, dead
And empty, from my path like winnowed husks
Will vanish. Everywhere in high revolt
Against an order fallen to chaos, men
Must welcome us and swell our avalanche,
That from the Arctic to the Middle sea
Between the gulf of storms and Volga's tide
Will utterly abolish Christendom.

[*The belfry bursts asunder and comes down with a heavy noise; the bells in a stream of molten metal splash among the falling stones; a broad sheet of flame soars up; and a prolonged indrawn sigh fills the square*].

FLORIMOND, *much dismayed, goes out.*

MAMMON. The beauty and the cleanliness of flame,
The justice and the purity of war:
With these to purge the world of Christendom
And clear a space profane, that men at last
May be themselves, the conscious Universe!
Who asks a higher task, a nobler game,
A more heroic agony? Behold
Our beacon blazing—

A soldier *speaks indistinctly.*

MAMMON. What?

THE SOLDIER. The fiery cross!

MAMMON. The fiery cross? The image pleases me:—

City to city, land to land shall speed
The message of deliverance, nightly flung
In brindled flame against the firmament,
As burning belfries topple into heaps
Resoldered by their molten chimes, and all
Cathedrals, churches, abbeys, purified
By fire, to dust and ashes crumble down,
Till not a consecrated stone shall stand
Upon another, and the smelted earth
Return to unadulterate matter free
From immaterial dreams that rot the air!

GOTTLIEB. The word of God! The word of God remains.

WOLFHART. The middle window; in the third story; there.—

Now, gunner—

MAMMON. Do not fire! I pardon that.—

The word of God became a feeble lie
When men perceived how systems, suns and stars,
The earth and flowers and beasts and folk evolved
From the one staple of the Universe.
Bibles and liturgies are impotent;
In Baalbec who worships now the sun,
Or who in Zion to Jehovah pours
The first-born blood? The fanes are ruined; spent
The adoration that was only fond
Expedient, frantic makeshift for delayed
Self-consciousness in men; the truest creed
Dies like a mollusc when you crack the shell.
Instead of temples I bring the universe;

Instead of creeds I offer you yourselves,
The greatness of the universe become
Self-conscious; and I bid you welcome war—
My soldiers, trained to fight!—welcome a war
The noblest ever waged! Scope shall be yours
Such as ensanguined paladins enjoyed
Before our congresses decided *not*
To kill too many or to hurt too much.
The wealth of Christendom is there to seize,
And beauty waits on rapture and the sword.
We mean by war all that war ever meant.
Destruction's ministers, death's freemen, lust's
Exponents, daily like a blood-red dawn
In flames and crimson seas we shall advance
Against the ancient immaterial reign
Of spirit, and our watchword shall be still,
"Get thee behind me, God; I follow Mammon."
And last, my comrades in this holiest war,
That you may know you are no common soldiers,
To-morrow as a largess and free gift
From me, and as a token of your high
Vocation, each of you shall in gold receive
Ten sovereigns, earnest of the wealth and power,
The greatness that the lowliest may attain
On Mammon's battlefields.

THE SOLDIERS. God save the King!

MAMMON. God—save—the—King!

THE MOB *laughs loud, long and discordantly.*

MAMMON. Soldiers, that old inane
Accustomed cry must cease. God never saved
A king:—which king of all the catalogue
Who came to violent ends was saved by God,

From poison, from assassins, from the scaffold?
They died the death their enemies decreed.
God never yet did anything at all.
And why? Because there is none; never was.
Yet must our battle-cry be as I said,
"Get thee behind me, God; I follow Mammon."
By God you understand the modern world,
A sink and overflow of decadence
With slimy rags and greasy fragments stopped:—
I mean that old fatigued philosophemes,
Deflowered religions, gelded poetries
Frequent the markets, haunt the minds of men;
That rancid odds and ends of broken thought
Still gag conceit and stifle fantasy
To dupe the ambitious hunger of the age.
By Mammon you must understand a world
Purged of the fæcal past; a clean-run world;
A world begun again and wholly cured
Of God and sin, the immaterial wound
That pierces through and through, the open sore
That *is* not, though its grisly hue of death
Can frustrate vision, and its putrid stench
Evenom all the spaces of the air.
By Mammon you must understand a world
Where men are great and conscious of their greatness—
The very meanest intimately sure
That he himself is the whole universe
Become intelligent and capable.
Therefore our watchword and our battle-cry
Shall be henceforth—and let me hear it now—
"Get thee behind me, God; I follow Mammon."

[*Before the* soldiers *can respond a deafening explosion in a street near by shakes the square. With much clamour and terrified outcry the crowd disperses.* OSWALD, LARUM, *and* RYKKE *and* STROMER *with* GOTTLIEB, *disappear from their window.*]

Siegfried! Siegfried!

SIEGFRIED *enters.*

MAMMON. Run to the bank of Thule,
And bring me instant word how Islan does.
Is Dietrich there?

SIEGFRIED. He takes my place, King Mammon.
[*Goes out.*

MAMMON [*to* GUENDOLEN]. There may be death dealt now, and corpses strewn
About the streets.

GUENDOLEN. I will make music, Mammon:
A fiery drum is pounding in my ear,
And discords, wed against their wishes, ache
To be divorced that they may melt and flow
In sweet progressions and alliances.—
Prounice, come with me. You and your sewing, I
And my counterpoint, in stormy Christianstadt
Will forge to-night a rhythmic heart of peace
From the dynamic ether in ourselves.
[*Goes out followed by* PROUNICE.

MAMMON. A wonder of the world! She doubts, she fears,
Her pallor like the moonlight whitens things;
Yet with my thought she makes familiar play,
And on the desolation of the earth
Divinely looks lest she should trouble me.—
Dietrich! Here, Dietrich!

DIETRICH *enters.*

MAMMON. Have you seen Florimond?

DIETRICH. He left the palace when the belfry fell.
I hailed him, but he would not answer me.

MAMMON. A man of use to kings.—He seemed distressed?

DIETRICH. He stole along the corridor like a thief
Escaping openly who dares not run
Lest he should seem, or feel, or grow afraid.

MAMMON. I knew he would forsake me. He is a Christian.—
Will you be Chancellor, Dietrich?

DIETRICH. I, King Mammon!

MAMMON. You did my sums at school;—remember?
You have a head for figures; you are young;
And youth is my palladium. Yes or no:—
Will you be Chancellor?

DIETRICH. I will, King Mammon.

MAMMON. Take charge of these. Your virgin work will be
To wind up all the business of the State.
I'll put an end to money; it can be done.

DIETRICH *goes out, taking with him the dispatch-box and documents left by* FLORIMOND.

MAMMON [*on the balcony*]. Is it known yet? What building? And whose folly?

WOLFHART [*unseen*]. The bank of Thule, King: the anarchists.

MAMMON. This is the rash reformer from the Isles.
I hope they have him; I must make him mine.

SIEGFRIED *re-enters.*

MAMMON. Is Islan safe?

SIEGFRIED. He holds the bank, King Mammon.

MAMMON. The matter, brief and plain.

SIEGFRIED. Two factious sorts,
Pagan and socialist, with mutineers
From divers regiments——

MAMMON. What! soldiers, Siegfried?

SIEGFRIED. Unhappily.—These rebels in the stir
To-night, anticipating unopposed
Success, attacked the bank——

MAMMON. But Islan's troops
Had seized it?

SIEGFRIED. Yes; Islan had picked the lock.

MAMMON. They placed their bomb against an unlatched door!
It moves the muscles pleasantly to think
A finger could have pushed the gate they burst
With such expense of violence and such noise.

SIEGFRIED. Their bomb was as it were a thundering knock
To rouse their own forestallers.

MAMMON. Were many killed?
None of my friends, I hope.

SIEGFRIED. None in the street.
Two sentinels that kept the door within
Have ceased to be.

MAMMON. Two of my worshipped soldiers!

SIEGFRIED. A rabble joined the rebels and furiously
Assailed the bank. Duke Oswald, with the Mayor
And some strange customers——

MAMMON. The inceptors! Well?

SIEGFRIED. These then, and reputable citizens
Besides, recruited the assailants. Death

In Gottlieb's person, propped against a door,
Invoking shrill destruction on your arms,
Begat a savage enmity in all
Who saw him hideously flaunted there.
But Islan beat them back, wounding the Duke
Who fled in terror, crying, "The rack! the rack!
"Christ save me from the rack!"—gone mad, they say.

MAMMON. And Gottlieb?

SIEGFRIED. Boldly rescued by the Mayor
And his associates. Islan took no prisoners.

MAMMON. It goes as I would have it.—Wolfhart, bid
Your music sound our triumph.

FLORIMOND *re-enters.*

MAMMON. Florimond!
Our prodigal returned!

FLORIMOND. I wandered out;
I wander back again;—I know not why.

[*The opening bars of a heroic march are heard, and at the same time the walls of the abbey fall in*].

MAMMON. So all the bastions of Christendom
Shall crumble into dust.—Begin again:
Your clangorous trumpets—let them peal it out;
Your cymbals, and the thunder of your drums!

[*The heroic march is resumed and continues to the end.*

FLORIMOND. Now I remember why I came.—O King,
You rush on frightful ruin! Be advised:
Delay, discuss, mature your purposes.

MAMMON. Impossible! A cataclysm begun
Cannot be stayed, cannot withhold itself.

Makers of motions, constitutional kings,
Powerless as God without his Heaven and Hell,
Your party governments that lick the hands
Of voters—to be kicked politely in
And out of office: let them, since they must,
Extol debate and dignify delay,
Attend in fortune's antechambers, wear
The order of the apron-strings of hope,
Feed on their hearts, resourceful epicures,
And be the unpaid pensioners of chance!
In Thule kings are free—free as despair,
A conflagration or an avalanche
That knows no lull, no halt, but flames and falls,
Consuming, overwhelming.

FLORIMOND. Is not a star
More to be envied than an avalanche?
Unhasting like a star, and like a star
Unresting, said a famous counsellor once.

MAMMON. What star is that? I never heard of it.
The firmament is filled with vehement orbs
Excelling in sidereal despatch.

FLORIMOND. Nay, King, the sun at least stands still.

MAMMON. The sun?
The sun his planetary offspring bears
Towards Hercules in Lyra, momently
Advancing through the ether at a speed
That leaves the tortoise thought further behind
Than wireless news the plodding carrier's wain.
Suns cannot wait: in your own orbits you
And all men move containëdly; your years
Are measured by the gamut of the seasons
And ebon-ivory scale of day and night;

But my adventurous path no orbital
Appointment knows: onward I move; my year,
Eternity; my high arena, space
With stars like sands bestrewn: my journey's end
Still unattained and unattainable.
Yet all the while you glide along with me,
Planets and asteroids and meteorites,
Clear depths of crystal dust and wandering fires.

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

I

It has been asked how it was that Epicureanism and Stoicism went down before Christianity. In their day these systems had a great exhibition and acceptation; and both antedated the Christian ethic. Epicureanism had undeserved honour at the hands of Lucretius, was also transmuted into the exquisite worldliness of Horace, and endured in the sixteenth century an unnecessary resuscitation by Gassendi as the true complement of Christianity; while Stoicism, descending through Zeno from Socrates, exemplified in the life and embodied in the sayings of the slave Epictetus, found a shabby apotheosis in the deeds and meditations of the crowned mediocrity, Marcus Aurelius. How was it then? The answer is simple:—Neither of these systems ministered to our Vanity and our Malice. Both Epicureanism and Stoicism retained the dual world of gods and men. But the Epicurean gods, imperishable and beatified, dwelt in void space, indifferent to us

and our concerns. As for Stoicism, it held that the gods concerned themselves in human affairs, so far at least as to permit fortune and misfortune to happen promiscuously to the virtuous and the vicious, a seeming injustice which the Stoic easily explained away by assuring himself that neither the virtuous nor the vicious had anything intrinsically noble or base in their nature. There was a strain of the cowardice of Agnosticism in both these systems: the immanent gods of the portico as well as the careless gods of the garden were only half-gods, half-believed in. Moreover, all the counsels and philosophemes of the rival systems were directed to very pitiful ends: —how to make life tolerable; how to make it possible; how not to be troubled; how not to be afraid. It was not greatness that went down before Christianity, not a lofty genius like Heraclitus, not a clear intellect like Socrates, but a decadence of Epicureanism and Stoicism: it was a pedantic electicism of Seneca against the inspiration of Saul of Tarsus and the sublime myth of a crucified God. "O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The sound of that emptied the gardens and the porches; everything vanished before it. "Man is the son of the Highest—and His brother; for

God Himself became man in fullness of time, and died to save His erring kindred, that they might reign in glory with Him at the right hand of the Father. We are all kings in Christ." Nothing could stand before that. Vanity, the naked fibre of personality, was securely sheathed at last; it put on the whole armour of God and rejoiced greatly. "And then there is Hell, a burning lake where God's enemies and ours shall gnaw their tongues to all eternity." It ravished the heart of man; the profound Malice of humanity, at one time the hemp-stalk in Roman virtue, at another the erect intolerance of Christian morality, was wonderfully satisfied. Imagination had never been so clothed and fed and warmed; and after many centuries the glory and terror of it remain undimmed for myriads of men. But I know that the world is much greater than that. I know that man is the Universe become conscious, and now approaching self-consciousness. I know that there is no future; that there is no past; that time is not; that there is only this eternal, present now wherein to be and do greatly.

II

I am not a philosopher; philosophy is the evil conscience of the world, filtering out of power and beauty a sediment of system. I am a poet, poetry being the good conscience of the world, transmuting into power and beauty the utmost evil that can befall the individual and the race. This that I say is not a new philosophy or a new religion: it is more than these; it is the beginning of a new poetry. So absolute a mood and such self-confidence repel; but they are inevitable: what I do can be done only by one who knows very well what he is about. With me there comes a solution of continuity; the past is cut off: a new era begins in which men shall no longer be the victims, but the masters of Evolution. The vision I sang shall be realized:—

The slow adagio begins:
  The winding-sheets are ravelled out,
The swathe the minds of men, the sins
  That wrap their rotting souls about.

The dead are heralded along:
  With silver trumps and golden drums,
And flutes and oboes, keen and strong,
  My brave andante singing comes.

EPILOGUE

Then like a python's sumptuous dress
The frame of things is cast away,
And out of Time's obscure distress,
The thundering scherzo crashes Day.

It is not a revolution I propose: revolution is nothing. We have had revolution again and again: it is chronic in Europe—a readjustment of rich and poor, an uneasy turning over of a part of Christendom without actual change. Were Socialism a realized ideal to-morrow there would be no actual change: only the dead corpse of Christendom floating up again upon the tide. Socialism, like Christianity, proceeds upon the assumption that men are not what they are. There is little difference between Feudalism and Socialism. Socialism would lay hands upon the earth and its products, upon man and his labour, not heroically, in arms, by superior craft and intellect, as Feudalism did, but unheroically, by means of representative government (which is no government), by universal suffrage, bargains with the mob, and the prate of parliamentarians. Socialism is the decadence of Feudalism; that is to say, it is less than nothing. At its very utmost it is only a bad smell; rejoicing in itself very much at present, as bad smells are wont to do: Europe is noisome with it. Feudalism, Christen-

dom, Socialism, cannot be changed. What we have to do is to leave it all; to cease being maggots in a corpse, and come out into the Universe. I would have all men come out of Christendom into the Universe; into a new poetry. The great poetries of the past lived in symbols of the Universe—Olympus and Hades, Asgard and Nifelheim, Heaven and Hell; but the abode of my imagination is the Universe itself; and I would have it so for all men. When the minds and imaginations of all men exist in the Universe itself, and not in a symbol of the Universe, we shall have a new world. Is there any thinking person who does not wish to see the world made over again? Is it so lovely? Is it so sweet-smelling? Men tinker and patch with policies and economics. They might as well attempt to cure the plague by an exhibition of rose-water. It is Christendom that is the matter with the world. The world is sick of Christendom. We must come out of Christendom into the Universe. Can I make myself understood? It is by the imagination that men live; imagination, the poles of which are vanity and malice, is the joy of life. The senses are the ducts of the feelings; imagination is the gulf and the retort that swallows and transmutes sight and sound, touch

and taste, and all emotion, passion, thought, into beauty and delight, into power and achievement. Imagination must be fed, it must be supported. If it be starved, both the individual and society degenerate and pass down into the lowest class. What imagination really desires is to devour the whole universe, and digest it into the fairest raiment for itself, an ever-renewed body divinely nourished on ethereal nectar and ambrosia. (There is no language for what I have to say: my meaning hides behind my words.) In all ages imagination took the Universe as far as it knew it and transmuted it to its purpose, into Olympus and Hades, into Asgard and Nifelheim, or into Heaven and Hell. General Booth, long-headed, shrewd, entirely candid, the perfect practical-poetic type, divined this, and applied his divination relentlessly. In the end of the nineteenth century, when the imaginative material structure of Christianity, as distinct from its immaterial and moral tissue and substance (I leave the corpse and maggot image for the moment), had crumbled away, except in the most backward countries, leaving the masses practically without religion and without a home for imagination, the Salvation Army out of the ruins built up its rude, effective barracks (contrast them with cathedrals:

—the corpse and maggot image is not strong enough), and riveted the imagination of the lower orders once more into a red-hot Hell and a glowing Heaven. The moral purpose and effect of the Salvation Army, its economic reforms and beneficence, these by themselves would never have carried its drum and colours in triumph round the world. Many organizations and institutions have laboured, and labour still, in these fields as whole-heartedly as the Salvation Army, and are now forgotten or unknown. It is by imagination that religion or any cause lives and prospers. If you doubt this of the Salvation Army, attend its meetings. You can do so with me, now, at the Land's End. It is the annual carnival in West Penwith. The town stands on a slope, and the Fair Ground is behind on the top of the hill. At the entrance to the Fair the Salvation Army occupies a stance every night, like a lion in the path; but nobody is scared, and with two exceptions, none pay any heed. You and I visit the Fair thrice at night, and on each occasion pause to listen to the music and speech of the Salvationists. The Captain is a remarkably handsome man, very conscious of his good looks; these, his curly black hair and a concertina being his armour. His voice in sing-

ing is not very effective, and we never hear him speak. He seems to you and me not insincere, but shallow and good-tempered, having no depth of nature or strength of character with which to be either sincere or insincere. They are singing "Dare to be a Daniel" on our first visit. Present: the Captain, the band, half-a-dozen women and a few girls. The townsfolk and people of the countryside by the hundred troop past, going and coming: but except ourselves no one regards the Salvationists: they are not seen, not heard, not thought of, not even consciously ignored. We think this remarkable. No county in England was more responsive to Wesley than Cornwall. Perhaps the fanfare and glaring symbolism of the Salvation Army are against it in districts where the more intellectual, more ascetic method of Wesley prevailed. We grant that, wishing to make every allowance, but we remember the Fair. When the hymn is finished the Captain smiles and nods to a woman who steps forward and speaks. She wears the bonnet, jacket and skirt of the Army; is short and small; her face, lean and grey; her eyes, large, sunken, hard and hot. She gives her testimony eloquently; convicted and convinced; there is no question of her entire sincerity. She had been a great sinner,

without hope or help; she had ceased to care for anything; her one desire had been to die, to forget and be forgotten. But Christ came her way, lifted her burden and took her hand; and she grasped His with both hers, and she'll never leave go. "No!" she cries, with her hot, hungry eyes, devouring the evening sky, "I'll never leave go." "Amen!" sobs the drummer—a six-foot-three drummer—thin, angular, tremendously in earnest. The woman raises her voice to reach the passers-by. She says that she has been saved from Hell and an eternity of torment, and why should they, poor deluded sinners going to the Fair, not be saved also? She speaks for less than five minutes, beginning as if let off by a trigger, and finishing as if pulled up by a powerful brake. The Captain starts a hymn on the instant, the band joins in, the women and children sing mechanically, "I do believe, I will believe," the whole having the effect of some extraordinary automatic engine. The Salvation Army is, indeed, a not unsuccessful attempt to make people religious by machinery. On our second visit there is a smaller muster of the Army. After the hymn, again a woman speaks. She also begins as if she had been let off; goes at a breathless pace, but articulately and eloquently; and finishes like the shutting up of a

telescope or the snapping of a trap. She is trim and neat, young, pretty and as innocent as the daisies, but convicted and convinced. She speaks with profound sorrow of her sins; but "praised be God, the burden has been lifted. I was never a bad woman, but that was all the worse for me, as I couldn't feel my sin. At last I knew I had been a sinner from my birth, rejecting Christ and His Salvation. I felt that I was hanging over the pit; I felt the flames; I was singed in the fire. But Christ plucked me like a brand from the burning three weeks ago to-day. Still the memory of my sins and of my former lost state comes over me sometimes, and I hear behind me the flames hissing and I smell the smoke. But I am saved from Hell fire and sure of Heaven through the blood of Christ." Then she appeals to the passers-by: "The Fair is certainly the gate of Hell; you are going straight to damnation. Will you not turn into the narrow way and be saved?" On the third night the muster is still scantier. The bland, smiling Captain, with cheeks like steaks, smooth white brow, and curling black hair, touches his concertina in a dilettant style and starts the hymn; the band blares out the tune, "Dare to be a Daniel" once more, and the few girls present sing shrilly.

The drummer is the spokesman, a very halting orator: one secret of the success of the Salvation Army is the scope it gives women, who are, generally, more eloquent than men. The drummer blurts out short, incomplete sentences, but leaves no doubt that he also has been convicted and convinced; that for him Christ is a living person; Hell a terrible material fact; and Heaven a glorious certainty. What we note every night is this: Although there could be no question of the sincerity of the three speakers; although they had evidently been convicted of sin and were now convinced of salvation, they were, there, at the gate of the Fair, utterly unconvincing. They themselves seemed to realize it: the appeal to the unconverted became perfunctory and a formality in such unseasonable circumstances; and they were content to build each other up in the faith. The reward of the speakers was the applause of their comrades; the "Amens!" and "Glory, Hallelujahs!" that greeted the reiterated doctrine of blood and fire. Now as an evangelist, as a messenger, as a gatherer from the highways and byways, we find the Fair much more convincing than the Salvation Army; and we visit it, with clear consciences, every night.

It is an extensive Fair. The further from

London the bigger the Fair. When there is no music-hall within a hundred miles of the town all the showmen in England may cut and come again. On the clouded sky at night the ruddy oil-lamps of the stalls and the pale electric lights of the merry-go-rounds and the theatres spread a mixed lacquer of tarnished gold, dusky emerald, and swarthy purple visible from all parts of the town and for miles round, alluring the fancy of the young and the old, a convincing sign in the heavens of entertainment, frolic and festivity. The drum of the Salvation Army and the shrill voice of renunciation are no match for that wanton light in the sky. We enjoy the Fair on each visit, examining it with unabated curiosity. It is much more interesting than the Salvation Army. In the very gate, just beyond the blood-red flag, two nauseous youths are trying to sell a pornographic print, a feeble affair, commonly sold in the streets of London at night. They have no market that we can see. Near them a stout couple exhibit a "happy family," rats, cats, monkeys, dogs, weasels, guinea-pigs, all in one cage. Sweetstuff stalls line the way, and broad-faced, brazen-lunged, huge-fisted men do a roaring trade in a leprous-looking compound that cuts like cheese and is sold in chunks at two-

pence. Eight merry-go-rounds occupy one side of the main street of the Fair, with cocoa-nut shies and other adventurous traffic between. Opposite the merry-go-rounds are the boxers, the fat women, the tethered footballs, the strength-tests, etc. Two of the merry-go-rounds are small, old-fashioned, and hand-driven; the others are gigantic wheels, cirques of gondolas, of motor-cars, of centaurs, ostriches, boats, dazzling with electric light, and grinding out against each other from mechanical organs *Tannhäuser* and "Stop yer ticklin', Jock," grand opera and nigger melodies. At the top of the High Street of the Fair a helter-skelter in the form of a light-house trundles uproarious troops in a spiral journey from the sky to the earth; and, further up the hill with a wide space in front for the admiring crowd, two gorgeous theatres are filled and emptied six times a night at twopence, threepence, and sixpence. The penny gaff is a thing of the past even at the Land's End in Fair time. A bioscopic exhibition is the staple of entertainment in these theatres. There is no play in either of them; a little dancing, feats of strength, ventriloquism, and comic songs punctuate the various series of pictures. Mingling with the discord of the music, the pipe, whistle and

scream of the roundabouts, the cries of the cheap-jacks and stall-holders, and the laughter, shouts and shrieks of the crowd, the whirr of the electric generators, the pulse of the whole, sounds fitfully as we pass and repass the hot shaking engines in travail with their dynamos. For three days and three nights this travelling suburb of frivolity is thronged by Cornish crowds from all the towns, villages and farms in the neighbourhood. All classes are represented, all ages, with one mood, with one will in all—the intention to be happy. Of one thing all the frequenters of the Fair are certain, on each visit at least, that happiness is possible here below; and they are all bent on one more bid for it, seeing that their carnival has come round again. What they really enjoy is a satisfied imagination. The bioscope and the merry-go-rounds, the flaring and dazzling lights, the tumult of music, and the uproar of the crowd overbrim the imagination of the frequenter of the Fair. He has only to walk up the hill to be filled with light and colour, sound and movement, to have his imagination clothed as with a Universe of suns and systems. He enjoys because his imagination is replenished: there is no other enjoyment. At the gate of the Fair stands religion, preferring to the ephemeral

vanities of the travelling showman a vision of the Universe itself; but the vision is not patent, and the Fair is; and so the pleasure-seeker passes in. To the Salvationist at the gate the Fair is without interest or attraction; he sees something much more dazzling, and infinitely greater; which has also the fascination of terror: he sees a vision of the Universe. Imagination requires nothing less than the infinite. If the religion or cause is to be enduring and of world-wide acceptance, imagination must clothe itself in the Universe: not in a theory, which is vision dead and mummified, but in a palpable, tangible, grossly material Universe such as the Salvation Army provides—a world which was created by the spoken word of a personal God; a temptation and fall; an incarnation, atonement and resurrection; an awful fiery Hell of everlasting pain, and a glorious Heaven of perpetual enjoyment. The peace and joy they experience is the test and the proof of their religion to the converts of the Salvation Army. What they really enjoy is also enjoyed by the visitor to the Fair, a satisfied imagination.

III

Eternity: infinity:—only these are; and only these are conceivable. But to conceive the limitless there must be limits, and by this contradiction we start eternity with a beginning and make of the infinite a womb called space. There was never any chaos: a mutable cosmos always. In the beginning space was filled with the elastic ether, which is energy, the primitive form of matter: not liquid, not gaseous, of a texture and consistence unknown, but omnisolvent, omnicontinent, omnipresent, and omnipotent. There was no sun, nor star; no meteorite, nor atom of ponderable matter anywhere; no light, nor lightning; only the dark, oblivious, imponderable, dynamic ether filling space. This was the beginning, and this will be the end; and the beginning and the end recurrent throughout eternity. Space being infinite, the ether was one subtile tension of entire energy, while momentaneous rifts and ruptures flashed through its ever renewed elastic substance in the form of lightning, the first limitation of the infinite eternal ether. But all is matter; there is no such thing as spirit. The ether and the lightning are forms of matter.

To talk of the materialisation of the ether, meaning by that the evolution of ponderable matter from imponderable matter, is an ambiguity of science which I should like to see corrected. In literature and religion the antithesis of matter is spirit, a non-existent, unimaginable substance of an impossible nature entirely different from any form of matter. It is imperative, therefore, as long as this antithesis continues, and a counterfeit dual world obsesses the minds and imaginations of men, that the word matter should be synonymous with the one substance of which the Universe consists in its imponderable as well as in its ponderable state. The destruction of the atom and its reabsorption in the ether by radiation should not be called the dematerialisation of matter, but the devolution of the ponderable into the imponderable. (The Atom. It suffered much at the hands of many metaphysicians, and was finally scouted and scorned. But poetry clung to it, and chemistry and physics could not exist without it. To-day it has its revenge, not so much in the pregnant discovery of interatomic energy, as in the deeply satisfying knowledge that the atom dies. Even the atom had to die in order to live! When we rub a piece of amber we facilitate the death of the atom, as we help a

crystal to dissolve by stirring the solution. In light, in lightning, in radiation, what we see is the death of the atom, infinitesimal but enormous reservoirs of energy bursting their banks and melting visibly into the ether. This has been made known by the wonderful experiments of Gustave Le Bon, whose name we gladly write in the same line with Darwin's.)

From the tension of the dark, oblivious and omnipotent ether in many an eddying vortex sprang the first lightnings. (I shall use lightning generally instead of electricity.) Lightning with its poles or sexes, essence at once, and seed and yeast, secreted in drops, or cells, or electrons the first limitation of matter, and began the fermentation in the eternal ether which was not to cease until the appearance of the visible Universe. Were it not that it is the nature of energy to continue in being, and to insist upon the stability of any form into which it is transmuted (the metaphysician calls this the Will to Power), the lightning would have been reabsorbed by the omnipotent ether immediately on its secretion; but no sooner were the drops, or cells, or electrons in being than they sought an equilibrium and combined themselves into groups, each group consisting of an array of negative and positive

electrons neutralising each other and revolving about a common centre like a miniature solar system; and each group a candent atom of hydrogen. "In the beginning was hydrogen"; and this is the evolution of the atom. Interatomic force, the most colossal form of energy of which we have any cognizance, and the source of all known energy, being, as it is, the condensation of the infinite, indicates that the amount of the ether garnered and packed away in the atom must be enormous; in all probability many millions of cubic miles of the primal substance, which in its tenuous imponderable form fills space, are constringed and bound up in a single invisible atom. The revolution of electrons within this powerful microscopic system was multiplied in the revolution of gigantic swarms of atoms within the nebula. (There are other hypotheses, but the nebular hypothesis in some form remains the most satisfying to the imagination. We cannot proceed a step without hypothesis. It is sometimes forgotten that God was only an hypothesis. Imagination transmutes hypothesis into poetry and religion.) One of the smallest, probably *the* smallest, of many million million nebulæ, resolved itself into our solar system. The spiral swarm of molten atoms, cooled, contracted, and whirling

less furiously, flung off the planets, and they in turn their moons, to occupy a nook of space five thousand millions of miles in diameter, centred by the sun, circumscribed by the orbit of Neptune, and perambulated by errant comets that wander far out into the welter of darkness lying between us and the nearest fixed star. By process of Chemical Selection, of which the conditions, modes, and whole circumstance, thermal, electric and dynamic, have yet to be examined, from the primal atom were evolved all other atoms; and these assemblies of electrons, themselves combined in molecules, gave form and stability to the various elements, gaseous, metalloid, or metallic. But these, however much they may differ in appearance and properties, gold from carbon, sulphur from helium, consist entirely of the purest lightning condensed in groups of electrons forming atoms. By an advanced process of Chemical Selection which we do not yet know how to begin to study, but which in time we shall assuredly understand, Carbon, Hydrogen, Nitrogen and Oxygen were chosen out to be the basis of all life. This is certain, that there could be no vital basis without these four elements. The atomic cohesion of Carbon is greater than that of any other element, while the lowest

degree of atomic cohesion is found precisely in Oxygen, Hydrogen, and Nitrogen. The texture of so mobile, so mutable, and yet so perdurable an association of matter as a man, is necessarily a woof of the most unstable vapours shot through a warp of stuff that no achievable temperature can fuse or wholly volatilize. The inevitable also appears in the Selection of the matter of the brain. It is the whole body that thinks and imagines, while the brain records, selects, distils, combines, being at once a receiver, a sieve, a carder, an alembic, a loom, a lyre, and many kinds of implements and instruments. The multitudinous nerve cells of the brain, embedded in connective tissue, in the old image, like seeds in a pomegranate, each microscopic cell a system of radiated fibrils set in a trellis of protoplasm, and each autonomous and an intellect in itself: what are the elemental secrets of their manifold performance? Besides the four great elements, Carbon, Hydrogen, Oxygen and Nitrogen, so wonderful in themselves that any one of them might be alone sufficient for thought and imagination, the brain is further enriched with those two triumphs of atomic evolution, Sulphur and Phosphorus: one of them, the gold-hued marvel, Sulphur, a complex personality of nine trans-

formations—three allotropisms in the solid conditions, three as a liquid, and three again as a vapour; the other, Phosphorus, a great miracle of matter, able to exist in three states, a trinity, red, white, and violet more differentiated physically and chemically than many separate elements. The presence of Sulphur and Phosphorus in the matter of the brain could account, will yet account, for loftier deeds than Cæsar's, a greater perfection of colour than Turner's, a deeper note than Beethoven's, profounder thought than Nietzsche's. And when we delight to find that thought and imagination, hitherto considered psychical in the sense of spiritual or immaterial, are as physical and material as digestion and secretion, we do not degrade thought and imagination, we exalt the body and all its functions. The amount of sulphur and phosphorus in the brain is by our inadequate measurements exceedingly minute; but the efficacy of what appears incompetent for such great results as the music of Wagner or the plays of Shakespeare is not to be decided by the test-tube and the balance. The mere presence of certain elements, and that in infinitesimal quantities, and without their entering into any combination, can transform entirely the properties of compound bodies

in mass and volume. But our ideas of quantity are suddenly changed by that enchanting discovery of interatomic force. No trace, the smallest, of any element can be less than a molecule in amount, and as every molecule contains several atoms, we have in the most infinitely minute quantities gigantic stores of power, each invisible atom being the condensation of tens, or hundreds, or millions of cubic miles of the imponderable ether, repositories of eternity, hidden treasure of the infinite.

Of the countless nebulæ eliminated from the ether, condensed in systems of suns and planets and sown throughout space in constellations and galaxies, one at least has achieved a final result in the consciousness of men. We are the Universe, become conscious, and now at last self-conscious, the bisexual lightning that was and is the first and last limitation of the eternal ether, having through æons of Chemical Selection evolved life, which in its turn through geologic periods of Natural Selection arrived at men and women. In us are enshrined the two poles or sexes of the lightning, the earliest energizing of the infinite towards self-consciousness, now capable of the highest ecstasy and of all knowledge.

IV

"Is this the thing I want to say?" "Is this the thing that should be said?" Among the few who perceive the greatness and the terror of these questions, the majority look once and turn away for ever; some stare at the flaming interrogations fascinated till they go mad; only two or three face them greatly without any attempt at begging them; and perhaps one in a thousand years is able to answer "Yes."

No other man's fingerprint has the same pressure as mine, and I shall see that it appears on everything I handle, everything I adopt, everything I own. The gloves of party, of culture, of creed wherewith men hide their fingerprints lest they should be caught in the act of being themselves, I decline to wear. These are the whorls of my fingers and thumbs: I, look you; not a glove, but a hand. My bones and marrow, my flesh and blood, my nerve and brain, are different from those of all other men, even as my fingerprints are; and I am conscious of that and can make it apparent. I am not of the left, or of the right, or of the centre; but above these, and of the Universe. I say the thing I want to

say, recognizing enmity as the sign of my success and the unintended warrant of my power and authority. I say the thing I want to say and immediately thought is wounded, ideas are in the crucible, idols are overturned. I have authority: I write not in the name of any creed or party, revolution or reaction, but in my own name only. Nothing but that is authority. Academic degree, the mandate of a constituency, public sanction of any kind, can place people in authority, but to have authority and be in authority are not the same thing. Authority is inherent only in him who says, "I of myself announce this."

"Is this the thing that should be said?" I must not ask myself, "Is this true? Will it help? Will it advance the interests I have at heart? Will it make men better? Is it the way towards a millennium of any kind?" I must not say to myself, "This is the thing the world is waiting to hear, and which, when heard, it will reject with scorn for generations." I must not flatter myself in that way; I must not console myself with the assurance that the blasphemy of one age is the gospel of the next. I must be certain only that the thing I say is the thing I mean; and being man, and not a creed, or a party, or a culture, I will then say that which should be said, because

man is the Universe become conscious. And here culture is the most seductive enemy: we must know the best that has been thought and imagined in all ages, not for itself, but in order to avoid it, as we would avoid an exhausted atmosphere. Literature is the greatest foe of literature. We have jungles to cut down, gag after gag to wrench from our mouths before we can see the vision that should be beheld, can speak the word that should be spoken. Systems are jungles. Languages are gags, gags and bandages, which we must undo and transmute into meaning: our meaning. Every word we use is saturated with ages of meaning not ours; yet we must make ourselves so well understood that men, compelled to misunderstand us in self-defence, will maintain that it is allegory, that it is symbol, that we do not mean it. We must write greatly; we must be great: and I trust the famous writers of the day are as great as their reputations; the greater my contemporaries are the greater I am: we want men empowered to say that. I desire men to be great. I desire the meanest man to be great, and to feel great.

What we require is a renewal of Imagination. A dead historian wrote a book upon the rise of Rationalism; an interesting book of its kind,

containing references to many facts. But there cannot be a rise of Rationalism. There was only a decay of Imagination. The instinct of the holothure, a sea-cucumber of the Philippine Islands, amounts to genius. This admirable living alembic devours coral sand in its native haunts, and grows plump and shapely on the sapless fare. Shift him to some zone of the sea where his sandy pastures are not, and immediately he ejects the whole of his digestive canal, and all the organs connected with it. Rationalism of the right kind; but not a "rise" of Rationalism. If the holothure having rid himself of what had become unnecessary and ineffective, remained satisfied with the change, he would soon cease to be a holothure; but no sooner has this consummate genius sloughed out his declassed viscera than he evolves an apparatus entirely in harmony with his new habitat. The so-called Rise of Rationalism was an ejectment of the Imagination. The form and substance of Imagination had been in all ages a symbol of the Universe, that tended always to a more remote symbolism, to intensified supernaturalism, to a grosser superstition, the more definitely men took it for the Universe itself. Rationalism evacuated the old form and substance of Imagination, and

rested there wondering what had happened. One thing had happened: the world had come to an end for the Rationalists. By Imagination men live. Surgery has found out that, unlike the holothure, man can get along without a stomach; but Art knows very well that the world comes to an end when it is purged of Imagination. Rationalism was only a stage in the process. For the old conception of a created Universe, with a fall of man, an atonement, and a Heaven and Hell, the form and substance of the Imagination of Christendom, Rationalism had no substitute. Science was not ready; but how can poetry wait? Science is synonymous with patience; poetry is impatience incarnate. If you take away the symbol of the Universe in which since the Christian era began, poetry and all great art lived and had their being, I, for one, decline to continue the eviscerated Life-in-Death of Rationalism. I devour, digest, and assimilate the Universe; make for myself in my Testaments and Tragedies a new form and substance of Imagination; and by poetic power certify the semi-certitudes of science.

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